Communist Party in Power in Indian States

A Study of the Promise of New Society in the Context of the Bourgeois Liberal Social System

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work embodied in this thesis entitled "Communist Party In Power In Indian States : A Study Of The Promise Of New Society In The Context of A Bourgeois Liberal Social System" is an original work done by me. I have prosecuted research towards the submission of this work on an ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship during the period from November 16, 1981 to November 15, 1985 at the Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow.

This work, being submitted to the Kanpur University, Kanpur, for the consideration of the award of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science has not been submitted whether in whole or in a part thereof elsewhere for the consideration of any degree.

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(b) Shri Eashvaraiah worked under my Supervision for four years;

(c) Shri Eashvaraiah has put in over 200 days attendance in the Giri Institute of Development Studies, Lucknow as required by Ordinance 9 of Kanpur University.

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AS IN PRIVATE LIFE ONE DISTINGUISHES FROM WHAT HE REALLY IS AND DOES, STILL MORE IN HISTORICAL STRUGGLES MUST ONE DISTINGUISH THE PHRASES AND FANCIES OF THE PARTIES FROM THEIR REAL ORGANISM AND THEIR REAL INTERESTS, THEIR CONCEPTION OF THEMSELVES FROM THEIR REALITY.

- KARL MARX

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P.B.

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION : ON STUDYING COMMUNIST PARTIES IN POWER IN INDIAN STATES

In recent years a number of studies have been undertaken on communism in India; yet, not many have focussed attention on the problems emerging from the capture of political power at the state level by the communist parties.[1] The field has been left almost exclusively to the leaders of various parties and groups whose approach has been, more often than not, polemical. The richness of Marxist theory and practice requires a more rigorous and objective approach in addition to theoretical competence and expertise in empirical analysis than is provided by these studies. The few studies by academicians that have tried to analyse this problem are either not very rigorous from the view point of the complexities of Marxist theory or lack sufficient empirical basis to substantiate the theoretical derivations.[2] Especially important is the problem of understanding the issue of limits and possibilities of a socialist society, which the communist parties uphold at the theoretical level, while functioning within a bourgeois liberal political system, particularly in India where such a system has been transplanted from a colonial power and has to be understood as it evolved in

all its dialectics. In this context it is important to examine the claims of the communist parties like the CPI and CPI(M) that they can come to power in most of the states and ultimately at the Centre as well through electoral means, and thereby advance class struggles in the direction of establishment of a socialist society.

There have been a reasonably large number of studies made on this aspect, of course with varied approaches. Three main trends can generally be seen. The first consists of studies made mainly to evaluate the electoral failures and successes with quantitative analysis mainly within a positivistic framework. Arguments of these studies have been substantiated by evidence from electoral statistics and from government and academic sources. A few studies have also taken into account aspects of the economy like industry and agriculture and aspects of society in analysing the issue. The glaring flaw in this approach, apart from limitations of the positivist methodology used, is that they treat the communist parties as any other bourgeois party, explicitly or implicitly. As such these studies fail to undertake an analysis of Marxist praxis in relation to communist parties working for their goals in a bourgeois society.

Robert L. Hardgrave, Jr. in his "Communist Parties of Kerala : An Electoral Profile" has discussed the ecological

base of communist support in Kerala. He points to the fact that the support which the communist parties receive has to be viewed in the context of the high literacy rate and landlessness in a densely populated state, and inequality of land ownership in Kerala. When it comes to the issue of land reform in a state where there is not enough land to distribute any further and where industry is not expanding to absorb the surplus population in agriculture, the communist parties face a dilemma. As a result issues on which the communists mobilize these categories of population become non-issues and their electoral support and seats in the assembly get reduced, thus isolating the party. He writes :

> "under the present circumstances their reduction of seats and isolation in the assembly could well serve as a catalyst to increasing extraparliamentary activity, agitation and revolutionary adventurism and frustration" (Hardgrare, 1975).

It is clear that the author confines to the question of electoral politcs, its problems and prospects without going into questions of distinction between the parliamentary and extraparliamentary methods as they are viewed by the communist parties and the limitations of a bourgeois parliamentary framework in which class-based politics cannot go beyond certain limits. After the limits are reached the left parties will not have anything to put before the poorer sections of the population and thus fail to compete

electorally with bourgeois political parties. The question is whether the continued participation in parliamentary politics by the left parties strengthens the illusions of the people in the present bourgeois system to the advantage of the bourgeoisie or dispels them? It is not a question of the continuance of the left parties in power and going ahead with their programme, because in the electoral framework, in India, in addition to the problems that emerge out of the interaction between parliamentary institutions and the Indian socio-economic ethos, the continuance of any party in power is conditioned by the number of seats gained and dealings in alliances, both with other left parties and non-left parties.

A.K. Mukhopadhyaya points out the fallacy of this approach. When the CPI came to power in Kerala in 1957 the party polled 35 per cent of the votes and won 60 seats out of the 100 it contested in the Assembly consisting of 126 seats. In the election of 1960, after the ouster of the communist ministry, the party's share of votes increased from 35 per cent to 39 per cent although it won only 29 seats out of the 108 seats contested and was not able to form the ministry. (Mukhopadhyaya : 1984). Thus the overall strength of the communist parties cannot be seen in the electoral mirror. Their strength and its impact can be accounted for and interpreted in a qualitative sense in

terms of the influence the left parties exert on the state and its institutions while out of power, and by the substantial changes they introduce in the pattern of working of these institutions while in power.

Mukhopadhyaya puts forward certain other factors which go to show the strength of communist parties but which the electoral studies cannot encompass. One is the fact that the population in Kerala is particularly skewed towards the young. A majority of them are communist supporters but cannot vote because they are in the age-group of 16-20 years. Two, the percentage of nonparticipating voters in Kerala is 20 to 30 whose boycott or abstention from or indifference to voting cannot be considered anti-communist in any way. Three, communists never contested all the seats mainly to accommodate their partners in the Left/United Fronts. If all these factors are taken into account the picture will show a higher strength and a more conscious support to the communist parties. Mukhopadhyaya feels that, neither Nossiter nor Hardgrayen or Victor Fic before him have highlighted these dimensions of electoral politics in Kerala in their otherwise thoroughly descriptive accounts of communist politics in the state. (A. K. Mukhopadhyaya, 1984 : 79). It can be argued that this view can be applies to other states like West Bengal as also India as a whole.

It is in the same sense that T.J. Nossitor's book (1982) Communism in Kerala : A Study in Political Adaptation also fails to make a dent into the problem of studying the strength and influence of communist parties inside and outside assemblies and the overall influence they enert on the state and its institutions. Thomas Issac has rightly said that Nossiter's book Communism in Kerala : A Study in Political Adaptation is rather misleading. What the communist movement was trying to adapt itself to - the specificities of the changing socio-economic structure of Kerala - is not analysed by Nossiter. The main problem in this approach is that the "Changing electoral profiles and governments are portrayed as the result of developments in the political sphere, by and large autonomous of the socio-economic domain. Similarly, the alliances and programmes are presented as merely the shrewed adaptations of Malayali communism to electoral exigencies and compulsions. The result is a study of the communist movement in Kerala as reflected in the electoral mirror". (Issac, 1984 : 201).

Issac points to the inadequacy of the electoral approach in encompassing various dimensions of the communist movement. Sometimes such an approach may even lead to wrong conclusions. Issac takes, as a an example the period of the early seventies. The CPI(M) being out of power, this was, in fact, a period of militant mass mobilization and struggle

led by the CPI(M) in Kerala to pressurise the government to expedite the process of implementation of certain legislative measures, especially tenancy reforms and ceiling laws which were enacted when the party was in power during 1967-69. The struggle of the hutment dwellers to forcibly occupy 10 per cent hutment land plunged the whole state into a virtual turmoil 'unparalleled in the history of the party'. The period also witnessed militant struggles of the peasants on the issue of surplus land and a big spurt in industrial strikes, particularly in coir factories. The student front for the first time undermined the hegemony of the Congress Students' Front and also made inroads into sections of middle class employees. But if one confines to the parliamentary and electoral gains, this period was a declining phase of the strength of the CPI(M) because the party suffered a setback in the 1970 mid-term polls when its seats in the Assembly were reduced from 52 in 1967 to 28 in 1970.

The above arguments of Mukhopadhyaya and Issac are consistent with the views of Lenin who pointed out that a heavy reliance on electoral performance of parties representing different classes in a bourgeois set-up can at best be misleading. As Lenin argued in his 'Letters on Tactics' (1970), because of various reasons the representation in bourgeois parliamentary institutions presents an inflated

picture of the support of the bourgeois parties (including those which win power) on the one hand and a deflated picture of the representation of the parties of workers and peasants and other oppressed classes on the other. This would be much more so in the case of countries like India and other pre-capitalist social formations where various social forces and patterns of consciousness specific to the countries influence heavily the pattern of voting, and the representation in bourgeois liberal political institutions only overshadows this reality.

The reference to the above works on communist politics both while the party was in power and out of power has been made only to point out the inadequacies of the electoral approach to the study of communist parties. The best way is to study the communist parties working in bourgeois parliamentary system is to make a basic formulation about the communist parties concerned regarding their theory, strategy and tactics and consider their electoral strategy as one aspect of their overall programme.

Another set of arguments made by Satya Moorthy (1977) Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt (1977) Ashok Rudra (1981) and Partha Chatterjee (1982) highlight the methodological and theoretical issues related to electoral politics in bourgeois political institutions in general and strategies and tactics of communist parties in particular, with much more rigour.

Criticising a work on electoral trends in India done by two known authorities on Indian politics, W.H. Morris Jones and Biplab Dasgupta, Patterns and Trends in Indian Politics : An Ecological Analysis of Aggregate Data on Society and Elections, Moorthy argued that the authors give importance to the political structure, party system and the social institutions within which the elections take place, the use of electoral data for analysing these aspects is questionable. The data on elections cannot be used as a cumulative basis for testing various hypotheses related to the above issues. Such data can at best be used as a source of behavioural and attitudinal information. Moorthy questions the tendency of the authors to relate the electoral performance of the political parties through districtwise variations to the socio-economic features of different areas by distinguishing the areas of electoral strength from those of electoral weakness. Implicit in the whole approach of the above authors is positivism and empiricism. But empirical data, writes Moorthy, can be a means to understand concrete social reality but not an end in themselves.

Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt in their article "The Bourgeois States in Post-Colonial Societies" (1977) discussed some theoretical issues related to the changing phases of imperialism, their impact on class differentiation

within the ex-colonial countries and their implication for the strategies and tactics of the communist parties. Issues of particular importance that figure in the discussion are participation in elections, parliamentary institutions, formation of alliances and governments at national, regional and local levels. They conclude that by virtue of their participation in the governments or formation of governments on their own, the communist parties are invariably led to revisionism. This is notwithstanding their agreement with those who really link electoral struggles with class-based struggles for the ultimate capture of power by the parties of workers and peasants.

Ashok Rudra in "One Step Forward and Two Steps Backward" (1981) analyses the claims of the left parties in West Bengal, particularly the CPI and CPI(M) who have been in power for the last eight years in that state. He disagrees with the claim of the left parties that they have evolved class-based leadership in rural West Bengal by utilizing the Panchayat Raj institutions. The reference is to the emergence of a certain category of democratic minded influential villagers like teachers, doctors and advocates along with peasants and agricultural workers to the leadership positions at village, Anchal, Samiti and Parishad levels.

The left parties have explicated their stand elsewhere

on the nature of bourgeois representative institutions in India that assemblies and parliament represent the interests of the big bourgeoisie, monopoly classes and feudal elements although the representatives themselves do not directly come from these classes. Rudra argues on the basis of the same logic of the left parties that while the representatives of the assemblies and parliaments can represent the interests of the monopoly and big bourgeois classes how is it that the leaders in the local self-government institutions, cannot represent the local self-government institutions, cannot represent the interests of the landlord and rich peasant classes in the countryside. Even the presence of a small number of representatives from these classes in the rural areas, which cannot be ruled out in the case of the panchayats in West Bengal, along with the petty-bourgeois and middle class representatives like teachers and doctors, may very well reinforce the dominance of these classes in an indirect way.

Partha Chatterjee "Caste and Politics in West Bengal (1982)" raises the questions of ideology and consciousness as treated by the left parties while in power in the process of implementation of various redistributive and relief programmes, particularly in West Bengal. He writes that the widespread support for the left parties among the poorer sections of the peasantry, both landless and land owners is derived in

a large part from the governmental and administrative performance of the three governments in West Bengal in which the left parties participated. However, the movements and patterns of mobilisation of the peasantry are geared towards ensuring electoral gains based on the promise of beneficial administrative action. To quote him :

> "It should not therefore, be surprising if it is found that peasant consciousness still regards the state and the various organisations or personalities vying for state power as external entitites..... worthy of veneration or rebellion, but never as the products of a set of social relations of power and authority of which itself is a part. Since the left parties have confined largely to the question of the choice of appropriate representatives and not so much to the task of conscious organization to overthrow the existing relations of power, the evidence of support to the left does not necessarily reflect a corresponding demolition of the structures of false consciousness among the people" (Chatterjee, 1982 :95).

Chatterjee's argument essentially points to the inability of the left parties in power to utilize the representative institutions and state apparatus to dispel the parliamentary illusions of the people and conscientise them on left ideological lines.

This brings us to the second category of studies under which I include : Paul R. Brass "Political parties of the Radical Left in South Asian Politics", two works by G.K. Lieten viz., "Progressive State Governments : An Assessment of the First Communist Government in Kerala" and the First

Communist Ministry in Kerala 1957-59 : Ronald J. Herring's Land to the Tiller : Political Economy of Agrarian Reforms In South Asia.

Studies that come under this category are those made by leftist academicians and intellectuals, some of them associated, in one way or the other, with communist parties and academic intellectuals having an implicit Marxist framework. Most of these studies focus specially on communist parties and the treatment has been distinct unlike the studies in the first category. The major aspects that have been covered by these studies are : peasant movements, mobilisation of agricultural and industrial labourers and work in caste associations and religious organisations which requires a critical and non-quantitative approach as the questions of political consciousness, class and caste, evolution of genuine proletarian leadership, froms of struggle and consciousness figure in these studies. Some of them have taken into account various aspects of economy such as land reforms and industrial development, aspects of society such as education and social welfare as also issues pertaining to state and politics particularly police, judiciary and bureaucracy. While these aspects are discussed, the authors have constantly referred to the limitations and problems of

communist parties coming to power in a bourgeois liberal framework from a Marxist point of view.

Paul Brass has focussed on the left perspectives in South Asia in terms of long term goals and a fundamental transformation of societies in the direction of socialism and communism. Brass raises two main sets of questions.

Included in the first category are questions like : What are the conditions that result in the success or failure of left parties in developing societies? What kinds of leadership have developed in these parties? To what extent, if at all, have the radical parties succeeded in recruiting to leadership positions members of the classes and castes whose interests they seek to defend and represent? How successful have radical parties been in building stable and effective organisations? To what extent have the radical parties succeeded in relating Marxist derived ideologies to South Asian conditions? From which regions classes and groups do the radical parties derive their main support?

The other set includes questions like : What happens to the radical and revolutionary parties when they have come to power through parliamentary politics like other parties? Do they seek to subvert and monopolise the institutions of government to which they have access or do they tend to become domesticated and reformist? To what extent can radical

social and economic change be institutionalised in a parliamentary system?

Lieten's Study, The First Communist Ministry in Kerala 1957-59 is completely devoted to a study of the performance of the CPI in power during 1957-59. Written with an appropriate Marxist-Leninist perspective, the book examines the theory and practice of the CPI at that juncture and the limits beyond which the left parties cannot go in the bourgeois liberal political framework as it works in the Indian context, especially in terms of constitutional provisions and practice pertaining to centre-state relations. At the same time, as A.K. Mukhopadhyaya points out, Lieten also exposes the reality of Nehru's socialism. "Indeed judging by the most unscrupulous manner of Central intervention in Kerala, and Nehru's involvement, together with his daughter in the same, one will be tempted to share Lieten's conclusion that confronted with the rising strength of the communist movement and the growing political consciousness of the suppressed and the exploited masses Nehru exchanged his largely uncommitted progressive image for reactionary ideologies" Mukhopadhyaya (1984 : 90).

Herring's Land to the Tiller is by far the most outstanding study of land reforms in a bourgeois liberal framework from a Marxian political economy standpoint. The author studies some other such experiments on the agrarian

ront, such as : peasant democracy, tenure reform in Pakistan, in addition to land reforms in India, with particular reference to Kerala. The author notes that 'Land to the tiller has been a rallying cry of all radical agrarian movements. Yet, the issue of agrarian reform is simultaneously less dramatic and more profound than its popular image. At stake is the transformation of the basic structure, the political economy of the agrarian society".

Apart from a thourough discussion of the policy logic of land reforms of right and left parties as they are worked out in a liberal state, Herring dwells on certain methodological aspects and his point of view in this regard comes close to the Marxian tradition of 'rejecting positivism in Social Science'. This methodological stance is inherent in his treatment of all issues related to agrarian reforms, particularly the data on landholdings.

Herring's main concern in this regard has been that data on land ownership, land concentration and incidence of tenancy present a dilemma for a serious analyst. In spite of the known fact that the data collected by various agencies, particuarly census data, are misleading, scholars continue to make comparative statements based on the issue of land reform that contributes to this situation in the ultimate sense

wherein univeral response of the landowners to reform legislations or even announcement of the reforms has been to conceal the actual situation by getting the records altered. I would quote the following from Herring regarding the situation in the regions in South Asia he covered in his study.

> "Landholding data are more ambiguous than is frequently realized for specific reasons. It is in the interest of the tenants-at-will to be recorded as permanent tenants, for tenants to be recorded as owners, and for rentiers to be recorded as cultivators. The jidicial form of individual ownership reflected in most data obscures the concentration of wownership by families. Moreover data on land ownership (as opposed to operated area) frequently are not available. Ownership units are typically far more concentrated than operational units" (Herring 1983 :14)

To distinguish appearance from reality, or reported information from hard facts, necessiates the adoption of a methodological stance which Herring formulates in the following words and in which he emphasises the social nature of the social sciences :

> "It is crucial to consider data as social products and to recognise that the conditions of their production determine the relationship between the numbers and reality. Though this understanding produces many analytical and methodological problems, it is central to any conceptualisation of social science as social or as scientific" (Herring 1983 : 15).

The theoretical issues which Herring has dealt with include class interests and regime interests in formulating

and implementing land reforms; the relative autonomy of the state and its institutions in relation to the landed class and the industrial bourgeoisie; and land reforms and bourgeois revolution.

Herring distinguishes analytically regime interests and class interests in the initiation and implementation of land reforms. The motives of the two may coincide and the interests of different regimes may serve the same class needs. The interests of the regimes in pursuing land reforms are "maintaining support, dissipating, suppressing, or coopting opposition and thus retaining power". Class interests are concerned with the preservation of basic ecnomic institutions and status quo, notwithstanding its readiness for certain marginal losses. Thus "both class interests and regime interests may thus involve either maintenance or transformation of the agrarian system and conjunctual exigencies". (Herring, 1983 : 217-218).

Herring also raises the question of relative autonomy of the state in relation to the dominant contending classes as recognised explicitly in Marxian theory, and highlighted by Nicos Poulantzas. The concept essentially conveys the understanding that the preservation of the institutional order and the longterm interests of the dominant classes may necessitate curbing of the power of the

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dominant classes. In a capitalist society the interests of the governing elite and officials in pursuing land reforms contradict the interests of the dominant economic classes but the governing elite will not produce such a policy that will undermine the "fundamental structure of the privileges because it has its own stakes in the preservation of the overall system characteristic of capitalist society". As a result, writes Herring "typical land reforms extend the control and discretionary power of the state apparatus while simultaneously permitting landed power to assert itself locally, particularly through connections to ruling groups, unless counteracted by local militant mobilization of subordinate classes. Land reforms which operate through radical popular mobilization rather than ordinary administration are a threat to that power and privilege" (Ibid : 218).

Elaborating further the concept of relative autonomy, particularly as it applies to official land reforms policies in bourgeois states, Herring says the autonomy of the state is relative in this regard because of a number of reasons. The regime interests are influenced by the centrality of the agrarian economy in the determination of the political and economic processes in a country. The regimes are structurally dependent on the landed classes irrespective

of the regime's concern in balancing and organising the political power of the landed and the landless.

Referring to the regions in South Asia Herring says that a dominant world view of the governing classes has been that feudal relations in agriculture are unacceptable - politically, socially and economically. According to Herring :

> "The ideal transformation has posited creation of progressive enterpreneurial capitalism in agriculture, whether of large or small scale. The land reforms in most of the region are consistent with both regime and dominant class interest in facilitating and completing the bourgeois revolution (often from above) in rural areas; the halting and compromised process reflects both the strategic constraints of partially completed bourgeois revolution and, more proximately decisive, the constraints of ordinary politics and ordinary administration" (Ibid : 218 :19).

Another important aspect of land reforms in India as understood from the view point of Marxian political economy is how do we conceptualise various tenures that have emerged after the implementation of land reforms. It is in this regard that Herring offers an explanation regarding the effects of land reforms in Kerala as they have been implemented mostly under the influence of the communist parties. One effect of land reforms, he persistently points to, is the embourgeoisement of the land reform beneficiaries who have become a liability on the party organisation. On the other

hand those poor peasants and agricultural labourers whose support and participation in parliamentary and extra parliamentary struggles was crucial to the implementation of reforms, got the least benefit. He finds fault with the very conceptualisation of tenant-landlord relations i.e. equating all tenant-landlord relations with feudal exploitation recognising that tenancy is a privileged property from. The recession in the strength of the peasant organisations in Kerala may have to be understood in this perspective (Herring, 1980 : 1983). In fact Herring concurred with and elaborated upon what Oommen observed in regard to effects of land reforms in Kerala. (Oommen, 1979).

I have reviewed only some studies which come under this category. However, although more illuminating, the methodology of studying communist parties in power in most of these studies is inadequate. While the authors have avoided purely electoral and quantitative methods of studying the phenomena of Marxist political Praxis in bourgeois systems they run the risk of subjectivist, rationalistic conclusions wherein concepts such as consciousness and perceptions become, intentionally or unintentionally, imposed or attributed in a mechanistic way rather than being understood as originating from the actual conscious, or passive semi-conscious actors. Basically knowledge about political reality is supposed to be based on

conscious social practice or passive political activity properly interpreted from the viewpoint of the actual actors. This has been the concern of important figures in Marxist theory and practice particularly Lenin and Mao. Any proper theorising based on such knowledge warrants political practice and active involvement in terms of organisation, leadership etc. or, as an alternative, suitable techniques or research and investigation whereby one can come to grips with the social and political reality.

In the third category I put studies made by political activitists and party ideologues and also those made by academicians who have explicated their theoretical and ideological positions and have also elaborated the positions taken by the political parties on various issues. In spite of all the limitations associated with purely practice-oriented knowledge, and also some times dogmatic adaptions of Marxism and Leninism, such writings are relatively more reliable and authentic. This is primarily because the political activists and leaders are the conscious and intelligent actors in the field carrying the responsibility for initiation of and motivation for political action and also because of their close association with the political actors till it reaches the logical and resulting in (or some times failing to result in) the achievement of the

desired objectives. Particularly important are the critical pieces and party documents written by rival party leaders, ideologues and activists. This is again primarily because of the similarity of ultimate goals and objectives of political action, though the differences between rival parties are there in terms of principles, strategies and tactics.

Some of the studies that come under this category and which are relevant for the purpose of the present study are the writings of EMS Namboodripad and Here Krishna Konar.[3]

In his works Namboodripad discusses the problems related to judiciary and the constitution, corruption, administrative and political and highlights the problems that the politics of left-left alliances and left-right alliances while in power are ridden with. That the CPI took an anti-Marxist stand and sided baselessly with the bourgeois and reactionary parties position is the essence of the argument that runs in terms of a juxtaposition of the Left and Democratic Front led by the CPI(M) and the 'Mini-Front' led by CPI that followed. Namboodripad pointed to the ironical turn the left politics took after the fall of the Left and Democratic Front while blaming the CPI led 'Mini-Front' in the following words:

> "In short, the present government is trying to take credit for all the good things that the previous government has done while it maintains silence on the police-goonda raj which it has set up in total contrast to the police policy of United Front Government and its Chief Minister who held the Home Portfolio in the Government" (1985 : 125).

According to him, the land reforms policy of the CPI(M) provided alternative policy logic within the policy framework of the Congress Party to solve the ageold problem of the tenant cultivators. The Communist Ministry applied the policy of the then Communist Party to improve conditions of the socially oppressed lower caste Hindus so as to enable them to catch up with forward communities.

Namboodripad also discussed his perception as to how communist party implemented the Congress programme sincerely. This approach, however, had its strength and weaknesses. Based on its own principles the Congress Party at the centre and the state could not oppose some of the Left oriented provisions in the Act of 1959. Its weakness was that 'what could be new communist government would fall short of what according to the communist and other radical parties are required to do to meet the situation' (1985 : 257). However, passage of the reform was not allowed to be smooth because it would deal a crushing blow to the feudal and other type of landlords and the Congress domination at the state level and in the whole country. But even after the ouster of the Ministry and succession of the Congress-PSP Government

the achievements of the communist Ministry couldn't be undone.

Namboodripad has highlighted the limitations of land reforms in the context of the overall economic situation in the country to which even the official documents unequivocally present as gloomy. The nature of benefits that occrued to tenants and the landless : is such that the benefits do not bring a cognisable change in the landless who gets piece of land and the tenants who gets relief from rent and indebtedness other economic forces like rising prices of agricultural inputs, consumption goods and low prices of agricultural produce nullify benefits by them. On the other hand is the trend where in a section of the old jenmis who transformed themselves into capitalist landlords, usurers and black marketeers who are controlling the administrative political set up. The old tenants also have become an integral part of the rural gentry. Land reforms cannot be effective if reforms in other field - industrialisation, education and cultural life, democratisation of the political system. That is why land reforms particularly in Malabar, have brought in only new type of exploitation (Ibid : 261 - 263 Passim).

In his works, Hare Krishna Konar discussed extensively the theoretical perspectives of bourgeois democratic revolution and socialist revolution as conceived by the undevided CPI and CPI(M) after the split. He focussed on the food problem, land reforms, the problems and prospects

of land reforms as conceived by the Congress Party and the communist parties. As a spokesman of the CPI(M), he upheld and defended the perspective of CPI(M) in relation to the CPI and the leading naxalite group of particular relevance to the present study are his experiences and perceptions gained as the Minister-in-Charge for the land revenue in the united front Ministries. He explained how he as the Minister-in-charge dealt with bureaucracy and judiciary on the one hand and the tasks of CPI(M) in relation to land reforms policy and the United Front are the following :

(i) "The United Front Ministry will help the mass movement and will extend the democratic rights for the same. The workers and peasants, by utilizing these opportunities, will take their class struggle forward.....will be able to gain even some partial demands".

(ii) Whereas the Naxalites adventurists harm the class struggle by just resorting to revolutionary phrase mongering, opposing elections and building mass movements by utilizing opportunities that are available that are available in the present set up. These tactics help only the classes. According to him, Lenin on and off explicated his stand on revisionists and opportunitists.

He writes :

"How correct was Lenin when he said that as the revisionists and opportunists help the working class by propagating about fundamental changes through parliamentary, so also the ultra-revolutionaries help the ruling class in another way by harming the cause of revolutionary struggle under the cover of revolutionary phrase mongering".

Further, ultra-revolutionaries have harmed the class struggle by placing the peasant struggle against the United Front. In fact the United Front has intensified the class struggle. "They asserted that the experience of the United Front Ministry would hamper mass movement and class struggle and people's fighting power have increased. The heoroic struggle of the people after the dismissal of the United Front Ministry, in spite of brutal repression proves it. If the class struggle has not at all intensified during the period of the United Front Ministry, why have the bourgeoisie and the jotdars become so infuriated? Why was the Ministry dismissed in the darkness of night? And why are the people fighting against this attack? " (Konar, 1977 : 41).

Much in line with the stand of the CPI(M) to CPI Konar criticised the stand of Naxalites in relation to the question whether United Front Ministry has strengthened parliamentary illusion of the people or it has weakend this illusion. If it is propagated that United Front Ministry will solve the basic problems of the poor step by step through parliamentary means that would strengthen the parliamentary illusions. The analysis of the revisionists was that the United Front Ministry should have continued. On the contrary, Konar says that CPI(M) has analysed the issue of the dismissal of the United Front Ministry from a

correct scientific point of view. The formation of the United Front Ministry and its dismissal has not strengthened parliamentary illusion among the people; rather during this period the people have gained great experience. "They have understood to some extent the class limitations of the parliamentary system. They will learn more of it in future through constant Marxist propaganda and their own experience of objective life" (Konar 1977a : 40-41).

In his works (1977b), Konar emphasised that the United Front Ministries in 1967 and after in 1969 played a crucial role in stopping the eviction of the sharecroppers, regularising the forcible occupation of surplus lands of the jotdars under benami by the bargadars and agricultural labourers in the struggles waged. Konar pointed out that contrary to the policy of the Congress the United Front Government within a period of nine months and with the limited experience they got about 2.32 lakh acres of land could be distributed. Although, it could not be claimed that all the land was rightly distributed, in 90 per cent of the cases it went to the right people. The administrative machinery which was geared to the interests of landlords was reoriented to work in a new way by setting them on the right track by "government orders from above and by the organised mass pressure from below....."

Due to the measures taken by the government 1.53 lakhs acres of land was recovered within a period of one year. The landlords from whom land was recovered included the big landlords 'the Naskars of 24 parganas, people like Baidyanath Banerjees of Birbum, Nawab Kazem Ali Mirza of Murshidabad' (Ibid : 79).

One question that could be examined in the present study is how far these 'partisan struggles' limited and confined to forcible occupation of surplus and benami lands and pressurising the government to regularise them through the administrative machinery is helpful in the realisation of the objective of dispelling the illusions of the bourgeois state institutions particularly the bureaucracy and judiciary.

The pertinent question at this juncture is how far the Left Front Government with only Marxist and Marxist oriented constituent parties in the alliance has gone ahead in line with the militant tactics that were adopted during the two United Front Ministries in which Konar played a central role.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Ever since 1957 when the erstwhile CPI formed the Government of Kerala and subsequently the Left and Democratic Front and Left Front Government were formed in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura the communists have adhered basically

to the path of parliamentary socialism, notwithstanding, some differences between the main left parties. The continuation of Left Front Government in West Bengal for more than eight years and a virtual weakening of the Congress party has a number implications for marxist theory and practice. One question which deserves attention is : how far is it valid to claim that the emergence and continuation of communist rule in a few states can be attributed to a desire on the part of the bourgeosie and ruling classes to tolerate such a situation in the interest of providing legitimacy to their domination of the political system without posing any serious threat to it.

In a bourgeois liberal system, the ruling classes in their effort to keep the system intact and to meet the impending danger of revolution, adopt reformatory socialist programmes. This is what is known as bourgeois socialism, which may be of a number of types. An important and frequently used institution for this purpose has been parliament, in which all parties with conflicting interests have representation. In the economic sense the reformatory socialist measures include populist programmes like welfare of and immediate relief to weaker sections and the downtrodden and workers' participation in the management of industry etc.

Theoretical support has been given to such measures by liberal bourgeois theories, Fabianism, democratic socialism and the latest development in the socialist camp that is, socialism through parliamentary means. The Congress Party which has been in power for the last three decades and half has been taking the same measures and stolen the show of the Left Parties.

As such all parties, including a party committed to revolution and establishment of socialist society, have to work within the bourgeois constitutional frame work. In the bourgeois constitutional framework even a party wedded to revolution develops certain stakes in the system such as using constitutional means for securing immediate benefits granted by law in order to advance towards higher stages of struggle for the seizure of power through violent means which does not preclude coming to power in coalition with other parties or on it's own notwithstanding the ultimate objective.

In the Indian context a party which comes to power in a few states has to work within the systemic (social and legal) constraints in the states in which it has come to power and the over all nation which are embodied in general and particular provisions pertaining to centre state relations of the constitution. It is pertinent, however, to examine

in terms of experience gained so far, whether these constraints and various others have become issues for rationalising class struggle of have worked as issues for advancement of class struggle.[4]

An attempt is made in this study to investigate some of these issues in relation to the working of Communist-led Left Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal with special reference to land reforms policy and tasks on agrarian front.

Objective of the Study

The study focusses on a close examination of the Communist-led Left Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal. In these two states the Communist Parties have been in power for a sufficiently long period of time so that the problems associated with their functioning in a bourgeois liberal system can be rigorously analysed for deriving certain useful conclusions.

In this study we examine on the one hand, the perception and understanding of their position by the communist parties, and on the other hand the advances the Communists have made while in power in these states. In this connection an examination of the major policies, laws

and their implementation in regard to land reforms in the states of Kerala and West Bengal during the period of Communist rule has been made.

The land question for the Communists assumes primary importance both in terms of theory and formulation of strategies for the achievement of a socialist revolution.

The communist programme on the land front is a part of the preparation of the masses for struggles by mobilizing the agricultural labourers, semi-proletariat of the countryside, and small peasants on immediate issues as well as ultimate revolutionary objectives. At the same time the land question is a very delicate and critical one in that both in terms of consciousness and perception, the rural proletariat and the peasantry are not very enthusiastic about the abolition of private property because of the strong attachment to land. Further, the new owners who benefit from the communist movement develop contradictions with the landless agricultural labourers in the process. The danger of their getting disinterested in, and disaffiliated from, the party organisations is very much there and has been illustrated in the studies.[5] It is pertinent to examine as to how the Communists, having come to power in the states mentioned above, have been dealing with this issue, the problems they are facing, the nature of

their programme in regard to land viewed in the above context and the problems and prospects of revolutionary consciousness.

In the study we focus on two aspects : the programme and performance of Communists within the legal frame work, and advancement of communist movement in terms of the ultimate political goal of establishing a socialist society.

As such a close examination of land problem as dealt by Communist Parties in power in these States in the context mentioned will enable us in unravelling the problems, propsects and limitations of their theory and practice. An empirical study of land reforms will also enable us to examine the following problems : (1) the understanding of the land reform policy of communist parties; (2) the nature of land reform legislation formulated by them particularly Tenancy and Ceiling Laws; (3) the kind of administrative machinery they have established; (4) the reaction of the people both losers and beneficiaries; (5) changes in the land relations that have been brought about; (6) the kinds of benefits that have been secured by the actual tillers of the land and attitudes they develop towards Left parties; (7) the changes in the concentration of land and distribution of land holdings and also patterns and levels of production; and (8) to the extent to which the Left particularly CPI and CPI(M) have effectively utilised issues on the agrarian

front to advance the communist movement and promote revolution.

The study addresses itself to the following specific theoretical questions of Marxism-Leninism :

1. To what extent the performance of the Left parties has been towards the advancement of communist movement?

2. To what extent they have heightened the consciousness and dispelled illusions of the exploited classes?

3. Given a class society and a class state and existing class contradictions as perceived by the communist parties, to what extent they have sharpened class contradictions, intensified class struggles and created revolutionary situations.

4. To what extent the communist parties have increased their preparedness for capturing power in the states and at the centre?

5. What happens when measures of relief are implemented within the bourgeois framework?

6. What is the nature of change and its impact on the beneficiaries in the land reform programmes?

7. How far have they achieved the above objectives by utilising representative institutions, forming alliances with other Left parties and bourgeois democratic parties particularly on the agrarian front?

Research Methodology

The proposed study is primarily an interpretative and analytical one and no effort is made to test hypotheses derived from an over-arching theory. As such, taken as a

contextual study of the theory and practice of Communism the study examines, analyses and interprets the phenomenon of Communist Party coming to power in a regional unit (i.e. the state in the context of the Indian federation) of a country in the framework of the overall bourgeois system.

The focus is not on explaining why communist party have come to power in certain states of India but on understanding their functioning in a specific issue area viz. land reforms, in an overall political system which, as explained above, is bourgeois. No attempt is made to formulate and test hypotheses derived from a theory of communism in bourgeois systems. Rather our emphasis is on understanding the social and political processes which condition the performance of communist parties at the State level in promoting, facilitating or hindering the overall communist movement and their progress towards their long term cherished goal of the establishment of a socialist society. Research methodology appropriate for this purpose is a contextual and analytical approach rather than the widely used positivist approach. The theoretical-methodological stance emerging from this approach is a self-consciously critical one.[6] Its main purpose is to interpret and understand (in an inter-subjective sense) a particular phenomenon in the context of social, political and economic structures and relations in which it functions

and from which it acquires meaning, rather than to explain it in the traditional sense.

Sources of Information and Methods of Data Collection

The sources of information consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data have been collected by conducting interviews and dialogues with government officials, leaders in and out of the government, party cadres in the two states of Kerala and West Bengal and qualitative kinds of data collected by intensive dialogue and probing with the individual peasants and beneficiaries. Secondary sources of information consist of studies conducted by research institutions and individual scholars, literature published by the CPI and CPI(M) and other left parties.

In the collection of primary data particular emphasis has been placed on Dialogue, which involves an exchange of views based on assimilation and reflection of practice in which the actual actors act, as also the happenings in their surroundings. In the dialogue the actual investigator is not just at the receiving end but the political actors become the co-investigators in the dialogue rather than conveyers of information. The underlying factor that subserves the Marxist epistomological position that authentic political knowledge emanates from political practice is that

political man is not 'abstract, isolated, independent' but is attached to the world and that political reality does not exist apart from the political actors.

It is pertinent here to consider the method of dialogue as a research technique and I present below the arguments of Galtung who has considered this question in some detail.

Galtung argues that in the usual interview method adopted in survey research the interviewer precodes the questions and forms the mind of the interviewee rather than vice-versa. The method of interview gives scope for getting data and information and not the experience and reflections of the interviewee and can at best serve only corporate and market research. If the unit of development is an individual human being or smaller groups and the social scientist wants to study the progress towards development survey research is quite inadequate.

Galtung distinguishes the dialogue which he conceives from the pedagogic Socratic dialogue. The latter according to him is a caricature of parody of a dialogue, because it is only an illusion that two people are involved as the two people are not necessarily equal. In the Socratic dialogue Socrates learns little from the dialogue. Galtung implies thereby that in a proper dialogue the persons involved should learn from each other. A true dialogue does not take place

between one with experience and the other without. Thus a dialogue is a true interaction where the social scientist himself or herself will change in the process. He becomes a part of the social reality fusing with others, conditioning and being conditioned by others.

The dialogue is best suited for exchange of reflections among a group and is based on togetherness and at the same time free play of the personalities involved in the group.

The validity claim of information gathered through a dialogue is higher because there is a dynamic dialective to the discussion which serves to unearth what normally is dormant and even hidden. From a methodological or rather epistemological point of view the approach of dialogue does not belong to the class of methodologies that can be used to test, verify or falsify hypotheses. It belongs to the class of insight building devices.

Galtung rightly suggests that it is unnatural to try to administer, systematise and co-ordinate the context of the dialogue. A dialogue should unfold itself freely and is closer to uncontrolled human life than to controlled laborator experiments. It should be seen as another style of doing research, another mode of insight production closely attached to social practice.

It is clear from the above arguments of Galtung that the approach of dialogue is rich in its potentiality

and flexible in its adaptability. Of particular importance for the purpose of this study involving an effort to understand the political processes under left parties while in power in India, is the political relevance of the dialogue as an approach. As Galtung writes : when there is real involvement and deeper understanding the dialogue might turn the participants into subjects in the struggle for development rather than into objects steered by development planning from above. However, the approach might become a controversial unscientific by the elites in the establishment and the social scientist who subserve their purpose. For only methods such as those which do not disturb the power elite will tend to be regarded as scientific whereas approaches that might have disturbing effect would be seen as politicised.

In my field work in Kerala and West Bengal during the periods, December, 1983 - January 1984 and March to April 1985 respectively. I had dialogues with various people involved in the functioning of the left parties as well the officials involved in the process of implementation of land reforms. The office bearers and leaders at district and state level Committees of CPI and CPI(M) in Trivandrum in Kerala and Burdwan and Calcutta in West Bengal have explained me the pattern of functioning organisational and tactical aspects of front organisations

as also ideological issues of their respective parties. Dialogues with some peasant leaders and members of Taluq level and District level committees have been useful in understanding level of onsciousness and their participation in various struggles.

Dialogues with peasant and panchayat leaders and beneficiaries of land reforms in West Bengal, particularly the bargadars who have been registered and the surplus land assignees have been useful in knowing the improvement in their condition and also how they perceive the limitations and possibilities of the Left Front Government in securing further benefits to them. In West Bengal the villages and panchayats I covered in my work include Palitpur and Mirjapur villages in Saritkur Panchayat, in Burdwan Block and Burdwan District; Benipur village, Gokarnee Panchayat in Magrahat Block, in the district 24-Parganas Doichandra village, Sankari panchayat, Kandaghosh Block in Burdwan district; Adityapur village, in Kankalitala Panchayat, Bolpur Block, Birbum District. The dialogue with the peasant and trade union leaders of Niyyatinkara Taluq of Trivandrum and Kuttanadu Taluq of Allepy District, State level leaders of Agricultural labourers with their office in Alleppy District provided insights into the Agrarian meovements in Kerala.

I have held discussions with some of the academicians, who conducted extensive field surveys, for getting myself clarified particularly with the purpose of understanding the change the process of land reforms has initiated in the rural economy of Kerala and West Bengal. Highly useful have been the dialogues with those who conducted studies with the purpose of examining the political implications of land reforms as implemented by Left Front Governments for the revolutionary advance, sharpening the class contradictions and advancement of class struggle.

In addition to the dialogues held with the people concerned in my field observations I have always tried to gained insights into the day to day material life of the people, the kind of change that has taken place in their social perceptions and politicial attitudes that are reflected in the behaviour patterns. Although impressionistic such insights can not be said to be negligible because it is quite likely and natural that a researcher who has some questions in his mind focusses on the relevant aspects in the objective situations and also gets answers that improve his understanding of the situation. After all, any conginisable change in the ethos of the two states in question should reflect in all spheres of life - social, political economic and cultural.

Footnotes

1. See in particular Ralph Miliband (1977); Paul Brass and Marcus Franda (1973); Kathleen Gough and Hari P. Sharma (1973); Hindess (1977).

2. See Bhabani Sen Gupta, (1978; 1979); Marcus Franda (1971; 1979); P. Roy Chaudhary (1985).

3. The refernce is to : E.M.S. Namboodripad, Kerala; Society and Politics (1984) selected writings vol. 2 (1985) which includes "Anti-communist Gang up in Kerala," "Twenty-eight months in Kerala", "A Short History of the Peasant Movement in Kerala", "The Question of Land Tenure in Malabar", "Land Reforms and the Peasant Movement in Kerala in the Indian Context", "Note on the Report of the Aoka Mehta Committee on Panchayat Raj Institution" and "Collapse of Administrative Political Morality".

Hare Krishna Konar, Agrarian problems of India (1977) and Selected works (1977) which includes "Two Struggles Linked Together", "Peasant Movement in the Context of the New Situation" etc.

4. See in this regard Robbin Blackburn (1977); A. R. Desai (1984).

5. An analysis in these lines has been made by Herring (1980; 1984); Desai (1981); Krishnaji (1979). Also see for further elaboration of this issue in the international context on dependency and agriculture in India, Frank (1981) and Brara (1983). For an empirical and theoretical excursion into to these issues with particular references to West Bengal See Ashok Rudra (1981); Kalyan Dutt (1981); S. Sen Gupta (1981); Khasnabis (1981); Chatterjee (1982).

6. Anthony Giddens (1976); John Gunnel (1975); Sudipta Kaviraj et. al. (1978); B.K. Joshi (1978) have discussed the limitations of positivist methodological stance from various angles and some of them pointed to the alternatives. For further reference see Connerton (1976); Apurba Mukhopadhyaya terming the positivist method of Compte as sociological conservetism has quite rightly argued with a historical perspective that on the whole the methods supported status quo in all its ramifications.

CHAPTER - II

MARXIST REVOLUTIONARY THEORY AND PRACTICE

One of the burning issues in present day Marxist politics, especially since the fifties, is the increasing emphasis on participation in the existing parliamentary institutions and formation of governments within the constitutional and legal framework of the bourgeois societies on the part of Communist parties.[1] Though this practice is sought to be justified in terms of the avowed objective of achieving a socialist revolution, yet it is being opposed by some Marxist political parties and groups which advocate either a total boycott[2] or a limited use[3] of the parliaments so as not to dilute the class struggle outside the parliaments and to avoid strengthening the illusions that already exist among the masses. The issue has become quite controversial because, on the one hand both the sides seek to justify their strategy and approach in terms of Marxist theory and practice and on the other, neither has been able to make any headway in concrete terms.[4]

This controversy has important implications for the future course of communist movements the world over. The Indian situation presents a typical case where the two leading

communist parties - Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), have chosen to form Governments at State and Central levels by participating in Assembly and Parliamentary elections and making alliances with various progressive and bourgeois parties while other communist parties such as Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist)(CPI(ML)), Unity Centre for Communist Revolutionaries of India (Marxist-Leninist) (UCCRI(ML)), and Central Organising Committee (COC) are either boycotting parliamentary elections totally or inten to use them in a limited way so as to serve the long run purpose of revolution. The need for a full analysis of this issue, both from theoretical and practical angles is of utmost concern to all those interested in the study of communist parties and their understanding of the political system. However, I will discuss the issues of parliamentarism, forming alliances, participating in and forming governments at regional and national levels not in isolation but in relation to the general theory and strategy in the Marxist revolutionary praxis.

I propose to discuss here the issue in the light of the theoretical position taken by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, Gramsci and Mao in regard to political ideas and institutions at different stages in history and the role of these ideas and institutions - particularly

bourgeois democracy and bourgeois parliaments - in advancing the revolutionary cause. In analysing the issues I will take into account the specific circumstances and the national and international contexts in which the parties in question are situated.[5]

Parliamentarism, as used in this paper, means utilisation of, or participation in, parliamentary institutions at national, regional and local levels for seeking power or propagating party programmes and educating the people on one's party line. Parliamentarism has played a progressive role in consolidating bourgeois revolutions and advancing the bourgeois democratic cause through representative institutions. However, in the wake of the emergence of the proletarian class it is considered to have a reactionary role as it keeps the bourgeoisie in power. Whereas the bourgeoisie uses the parliamentary institutions to cover and defend its class interests against the onslaught of the proletariat and for continuing its dominance, the proletariat uses these institutions as one of its various means of class struggles to establish "the dictatorship of the proletariat" and for extending democratic rights to, and bringing about social emancipation of, the masses. Proletarian participation in parliaments has to be distinguished from the parliamentarism of the bourgeoisie.

The proletariat considers parliamentarism as one of the means of enlightening and educating the proletariat and organising it into an independent proletarian party in its political struggle against the bourgeoisie for the ultimate conquest of power. Thus the working class not only saves bourgeois parliamentarism from the bourgeoisie but also propagates its mission and promotes its revolutionary cause by participating in these institutions.

The Marxist attitude to bourgeois parliaments has to be understood in relation to their concept of the origin of the state, political ideas and institutions.

True to their materialist world outlook, society is conceived by Marxists as having originated out of the material needs of human beings to produce and enter into certain relations of production. While forces of production determine the relations of production, social ideas and institutions correspond to the relations of production, or what may otherwise be called the economic system. The secret of the hidden basis of the whole construction of society is seen by them in the relation between the owners of the conditions of production and the immediate producers.

It is not that social, political and legal ideas and institutions correspond directly to the level of development of forces of production as some of the adherents of economic

determinism believed. They failed to appreciate that the development of the productive forces is 'reflected in ideology not directly but indirectly through the refraction of these changes in the economic basis'.[6] The ideas and institutions of the people depend upon the level of social development and the stage of economic development.

Marxian Problematic of Base-Superstructure Relation

For the Marxists, social development takes place in a dialectical way i.e. in terms of unity and contradiction. Everything changes or moves because of inherent contradictions. Contradictions, union and conflict of opposites, prevails in the material social world and is reflected in human consciousness. At the same time the Marxist understanding of political ideas and institutions in terms of their role in society has to be placed in the context of the stage of development of the objective material conditions in different countries. Parliamentary institutions in England may not play the same role as in India or in any other country at present. In the same manner dialectical thinking regards things and phenomena in terms of their internal unity and contradiction which gives them constant motion and dialectical development. Contradictions in the economic conditions at a certain moment of development are reflected in the dialectics of political ideas and institutions. Thus capitalism and capitalist

democracy at a particular moment may be both progressive and reactionary. In relation to feudalism and monarchic institutions they are progressive; in relation to proletarian democracy and institutions they are reactionary.[7] Yet, some Marxists tend to view different bourgeois regimes in a mechanistic way without making any qualitative differentiation. I will discuss later what consequences this has for the analysis of different bourgeois regimes and pre-capitalist social formations 'sunk in the same bloody morass of military bureaucratic institutions'.

Having been formed as a product of material conditions of social life, ideas and institutions play an active role, and in certain cases they even modify the material conditions of life i.e., the substructure. In the process of this interaction, the limitation, however, is that the sub-structure determines the nature of the active role of the ideas and institutions in the ultimate analysis.[8] Here comes the question of distinguishing the origin of ideas and institutions from the question of their active role in social change and at the same time the nature of the active role. The relation between social development, ideas and institutions that support the old and obsolete material conditions of life and those new ones pointing to a radical change have to be distinguished while keeping in mind the dialectical relation between them.

Applying this abstract logic to concrete situations, Plekhanov explained how social institutions pertaining to the super-structure considerably hindred the development of productive forces in France in the 18th century. Thus it was in their (i.e. obstructive and archaic social institutions) abolition that the whole meaning of the social movement in France of the period lay. Putting the issue in abstract terms Plekhanov says : "since a whole super-structure of social relations, sentiments and concepts groups on the economic basis, that super-structure first fostering and then hindering the economic development, there arises between the super-structure and the basis an interaction which provides the key to an understanding of all those phenomena which at first seem to contradict the fundamental thesis of historical materialism" (Plekhanov, vide Roy Choudhary, 1980 :5).

However, it is economic determinism to say that ideas and institutions of the superstructure in a society are an automatic product of economy. It is necessary to take into account the conscious activities and struggles of men in their evolution. The conscious activities and struggles of the people which influence the formation of the ideas and institutions themselves "depend on a variety of particular factors in a country's life including the character and traditions of its people, the personalities of its leading

men". As such the political and ideological factors that determine the pecularities of the institutions cannot be studied by reference to some general laws but they have to be understood in the light of the historical context. The programme of a communist party can have meaning only when it is based on a critical analysis of the interaction between the ideological and political factors on the one hand and the economic structure on the other.

Application of the Marxist base super-structure problematic to concrete situations in recent decades in various societies has varied from school to school. This has been more so in the case of revolutionary practice in countries of the 'Third World' in both the kinds of situations: where revolution has succeeded and where struggles are still being waged.

However, this aspect of revolutionary practice has been a subject of controversy, a discussion of which is important for the purpose of this Chapter. The controversy is not about the basis proposition of base-superstructure relation. Rather, it is about the need to analyse the objective conditions and forms of struggle in various societies having a variety of institutions in terms of the imagery of the base-super-structure relation. Hindess doubts the applicability of such inadequate, abstract

propositions, controversy about which is yet to be resolved, to the political forms of struggles in various contexts. He says that when we are "concerned with the forms and conditions of struggles in societies with parliamentary forms of government .... Political analysis conducted in terms of imagery of economic determination and struggle between classes must be fundamentally inadequate" (Hindess, 1983 :4).

Carl Boggs also points out the inadequacies and dilemmas of classical Marxism. For him it is a strange paradox of Marxism that it should have given birth to a remarkably nonpolitical and apolitical tradition which took various forms like 'economism and gradualism of Bernstein, the scientific materialism of Plekhanov, Kautsky and the Austro-Marxists, and spontaneism of Rosa Luxemburg. It was Lenin who through his conceptions of highly organised vanguard Party and 'Primacy of Politics', politicised Marxism' by reddeming politics from its long theoretical and practical submergence as a mere byproduct of the economic 'base' and raising it to the level of a positive historical force, a creative mechanism of socialist revolution. Even people like Korsch, Lukacs, Marcuse and Marxist humanists like Sartre and Kolakowski who deviated most from orthodox Marxism and chose to explore new intellectual paths also

rejected ultimately the political realm because of their pre-occupation with philosophical and cultural aspects of the super-structure.

Only one major Marxist who penetrated this theoretical impasse to "broaden, democratise and enrich the strategy of socialist revolution" is Gramsci. Of all the contributions made by Gramsci to creative Marxism, the two which are relevant to the present discussion are : the role of ideological struggle in the revolutionary process as reflected in his concept of 'ideological hegemony'; and the perspective of revolutionary change as a total and all embracing process which encompass all dimensions of human life, reflected in the concept of ensemble of relations that incorporated economics, politics, culture, social relations and ideology (Boggs, 1976 : 11-18; Miliband, 1977 : 48-49).

However, C. Wright Mills, a familiar Marxist writer, strongly feels that such doubts about the 'theoretical vacancy', 'ambiguities' in Marxist theory on the relationship of base and superstructure (or economy on the one hand and ideas and institutions on the other) are unfounded. According to Mills there is no scope for such a qualification of economic determinism, with an interplay of various factors and vague sociological pluralism. Marx, according to Mills, has stated this unequivocally and it reflects in his work as a whole, in particular in "his theory of power, his conception

of the state, his rather simple notions of class and his use of these notions (including the proletariat as the agency of history making)". Mills assumes with Engels that, "Marx allows a degree of 'free play among the several factors that interact', provides a flexible time-schedule in which economic causes do their work. But economic causes are the basic, the ultimate, the general, the innovative causes of historical change" (Mills, 1963 : 92-93).

Gramsci and the Theory of Super-Structure

According to Mclellan, Gramsci has been called the theoretician of the superstructure who opposed all forms of economic determinism and laid emphasis on the importance of political and ideological aspects of social development. Gramsci considered this emphasis more important in the West because the cultural and ideological weapons at the disposal of the bourgeoisie were, at least initially, more important than reliance on pure force. He drew a sharp distinction between countries like Russia and the West (Mclellan, 1983 : 181). For Gramsci, "in Russia the state was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper relationship between state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earth works" (Gramsci,

vide Mclellan, Ibid, 181-182). As Mclellan notes, this implied different revolutionary strategies in East and West : "In less developed societies the State should be the object of frontal attack; in more developed societies it should be civil society" (Mclellan, Ibid : 182).

Another important aspect of Gramsci's philosophy, which Sassoon has noted with deep concern is that Gramsci has argued against a spontaneist and economistic view of building socialism. Although Gramsci felt that no cultural reform is possible without an economic reform, which is a concrete mode in which every intellectual and moral reform presents itself, creation of new structures as an 'historical block' with the economic base cannot be left to a spontaneous sporadic occurrence. Sassoon explains what Gramsci implied by the above statement that the "hegemony of the current ruling class cannot be understood if it is considered simply from the point of view of legitimisation of the present social order, extracting if from a field of contending class forces". (Sassoon, 1980 : 129-131 and 235).

Salamini interprets Gramsci's concept of ideological hegemony in the same manner. The type of revolution for Gramsci depends upon the historical conditions and "these historical conditions are not structural but superstructural in character and consist in varying degrees of development of

either the civil society or the political society" (Salamini, 1981 : 61). Further, Salamini argues that the failure of revolutions in the West cannot be explained in terms of non-ripenness of objective economic conditions. In Western countries where the civil society is highly organised on the level of consciousness and wherein intellectuals and the leaders of subaltern classes have been absorbed into its orbit, the failure of revolutions has to be understood in terms of the failure to direct the ideological struggle against the civil society.

Salamini is impressed by a non-Leninist interpretation of Gramsci's hegemony by Tamburrano (1969) and Bobbio (1979). For Tamburrano, the distinctions between civil society and political society, hegemony and domination in Gramsci's thought are central : "The domination of, be it feudal or bourgeois, is the domination of a Weltanschuung which, diffused among the masses, generates a consensus on the norms and the institutions of that society. Likewise, the proletarian hegemony is the establishment of proletarian direction of a new historical bloc on the level of ideology and culture" (Salamini, 1981 : 135). Because of the privileged position given by Gramsci to civil society which is based on consensus it acquires primacy over political society which is based on coercion and domination. The conquest of power,

above all, is attainment of hegemony through democratic consensus rather than the coercive apparatus of political society.

The same is spelt out in Bobbio's substantially non-Leninist interpretation of Gramsci. Elaborating Bobbio's focus on Gramsci's shift in the concept of hegemony from the sense of a political direction to that of both political and cultural direction, Salamini writes : "hegemony denotes a cultural direction, in the sense of intellectual and ethical reform of culture and society; as a consequence of the subordination of the political to the civil society, the moment of domination, free from coercion is subordinate to that of hegemony. In Lenin dictatorship and hegemony are equally important, but the first, the movement of force is decisive and primary in relation to that of consensus. While in Lenin, the conquent of power precedes that of hegemony, in Gramsci it is the hegemony which must precede the other. The notion of hegemony is more extensive and its functions more encompassing than that of Lenin. In fact, Bobbio argues the agent of hegemony in Gramsci is not the party only, as in Lenin, but all the institutions of the civil society in charge of the elaboration and diffusion of culture" (Salamini, 1981 : 135).

According to Salamini, Gramsci also treats the problem of structure-superstructure relationship in relation to the

concept of hegemony. Whereas Marx and Engels were more concerned with the origin of superstructure than with its impact on society and assigned a passive role to the superstructure, Gramsci was concerned with the analysis of the role of superstructure in the socialist revolution and socialist transformation. In his scheme the relation between structure and superstructure is completely altered : in Marx the structure is the primary and determining factor; in Gramsci, it is superstructure which is primary and determinant. Salamini cites Bobbio (1979) to argue that the position of Gramsci in this regard does not put him out of Marxism as the basic tenets of Marxism are still maintained. Bobbio argued on the basis of Gramsci's concept of catharsis, "which indicates the passage from a mere economic moment to an ethico-political one. The term 'catharsis' can be employed to the passage from the purely economic (or egoistic-passional) to the ethico-political, of the structure into the super-structure, in the minds of men. This also means passage from objective to subjective and from necessity to freedom" (Salamini, 1981 : 143). It can be claimed from this argument that Gramsci did not approach the problematic of structure mechanistically as a relationship of cause and effect but as a means to an end. Gramsci doesn't approve of the dichotomist approach to the problem and conquest of hegemony by the proletariat, for him, is not

only a transformation within the structure but is also the result of the structural process by which subaltern classes develop consciousness and acquire cultural autonomy.

As for the destruction of old and bourgeois institutions, Gramsci saw it as a vast process of historical modification of socio-political forces that support the economic status quo operate beneath the surface of formal institutions. As Carl Boggs writes : "The ideological erosion of the bourgeois order at every level - economic, political, cultural and social - would precede the initiation of direct frontal assaults on the state; this process would occur through the continuous and organic development of the subaltern or oppressed classes, which do not progress harmoniously but which surge ahead and suffer setbacks, come together and break up, more towards a variety of formations in response to specific influences and events" (Boggs, 1967 : 52). Gramsci, Boggs argued, gave first priority to this multi-dimensional transformation of civil society which should take place to secure the political hegemony for the subaltern classes much before the attainment of power.

It is implied from the above arguments that Gramsci's perspective is the conception of Marxist theory and Praxis as a new and integrated culture encompassing on all fronts to initiate and generate new historical possibilities and a

system of new social and economic relations. As Carl Boggs puts it, this task, "involved above all the role of negating consciousness in shaping particular demands, in 'structuring' the revolutionary situation itself, in defining mass responses to issues and actions, and in setting the contours of future (post-revolutionary) development. Education - authentic political education - would be important, therefore in combating the old mystifying beliefs and diffusing a socialist counter-hegemony among all potentially revolutionary subjects; but it would be an education rooted in praxis, closely bound up with everyday political struggle" (Ibid : 53). Gramsci saw revolution not as a single event or a few events, particularly of seizing power and political control but as a series of events taking place over a considerable period of time. This included events initiated for creating conditions for acquiring political hegemony and control over state power and those initiated for the growth and sustenance of the revolutionary process.

The hegemony which the subaltern classes can establish without state power and before it is a limited one. It should represent most hegemonic forces available and will be better if the current ruling class hegemony is brought to a crisis.

It is in this line that Piccone forsees bright prospects for Gramscism saying that if in the history of Marxism the

period from the Erfurt programme to 1914 is characterised as the period of Second International and the periods between 1916 to 1920s, 1924 to 1950 and late 1950s to 1970s as the periods of Leninism, Stalinism and Maoism respectively, the 1980s are likely to usher a new phase of Gramscism. This should sound more meaningful in the context of the international communist movement at the present juncture wherein "both Russian and Chinese Communism have exhausted themselves and have found accommodation within a world order still under U.S. hegemony based on a new and not yet fully developed imperialist relations stronger than earlier versions and immune to traditional challenges" (Vide Corrigan, 1979 : 93-94).

I argue here that Gramsci's approach to the problematic of base-superstructure or structure-superstructure relation is relevant to the understanding of the present day impasse in the international communist movement. Issues underlining the relevance of Gramsci's ideas are : a gloomy picture of revolutionary advance in spite of the development of objective conditions in the Western countries; a nearly dogmatic approach to Marxism adopted by the revolutionary parties in both East and West particularly in India, wherein strategies and tactics of revolution are formulated in such

stagist and economic-determinist schemes that much cannot be expected till the objective conditions ripen or there is some headway in the development of forces of production and capitalism. A shift in the overall perspective in the light of the interpretations of Marxism by Gramsci which will imply assigning priority to the role of super-structural aspects is worth considering.

It is quite clear that Gramsci's basic propositions have important implications for the choice of revolutionary tactics and forms of struggle inside and outside the bourgeois representative institutions. Of particular importance is the question of priority between the political sphere constituting the state and its machinery and various institutions and the sphere of civil society wherein the broader issues of culture and religion and socio-economic organisation figure.

The Indian context provides an example of a multi-national and multicultural society wherein the state (polity) and civil society are in the process of getting organically related. Yet the process is very slow given the colonial background of political institutions and alien forms of political organisation and legitimisation. Although a frontal attack on the state apparatus and institutions may be suggested by Gramsci, it is argued here that revolutionary praxis should also involve massive action with regard to the

various shades of pre-feudal, feudal and bourgeois cultural patterns outside the state apparatus and representative institutions. Political activity of all sorts should be planned according to the native and regional forms of consciousness, organisation and revolt. Yet, the parliamentary left in India bluntly puts aside the various religious groups in India as reactionary, thus not having to work from within these groups most of the times. On the other hand the non-parliamentary left uses the native forms of consciousness and culture in mobilising the masses. Yet, a dent is still to be made from either side.[9]

Trotsky

By far the most controversial figure from within the Boleshevik tradition is Trotsky. His basic propositions, particularly, regarding international socialism permanent and uninterrupted revolution, and problems of socialism in one country sound more relevant today then ever.

As for the problematic of base-superstructure, Trotsky gives priority to the base, or the productive forces, and views the problematic in a world spectrum, thus implying that economic laws of world market operate across national economies. By implication the whole strategy of revolution and constitution of socialism should be planned within the scheme of world revolution.

Juxtaposing Lukascian proposition stressing the category of totality in Marxist method, and Trotskyite revolutionary theory in which capitalism and class struggle are considered as a world process, Lowy quotes Trotsky : "Binding all countries together with it's mode of production and its commerce, capitalism has converted the whole world into a single economic and political organism... This immediately gives the events now unfolding an international character and opens a wide horizon. The political emancipation of Russia led by the working class will make it the initiator of the liquidation of world capitalism, for history has created all the objective conditions". (Lowy 1981 : 48). Trotsky could pose the problem in this way so as to transcend the traditional perspective that saw the socialist revolutionary ripeness of Russia exclusively in terms of national economic determinism.

The political corollary of Trotsky's application of the base-superstructure problematic to his idea of revolution as a world process is the concept of permanent and uninterrupted revolution. For him siezure of power and revolution are a part of the superstructure and highest development in individual countries is possible through production, exchange and marketing of goods and services on an international level. Keeping this overarching perspective in mind it can be said that the prospects of sustaining revolution

in a country or a few countries are linked with the prospects of world revolution or at least a speedy extension of revolution from countries where it has succeeded to other countries.

Although Trotsky gave more importance to productive forces and technology for socialist advance to take place, he considered seizure of political power and establishing bases for proletarian hegemony very much a subjective, organisational and superstructural aspect.

Trotsky assigned an active role to the state and its institutions in the achievement and sustanance of revolution. According to him "the state is not an end in itself. It is only a machine in the hands of the dominating social forces....(it) is a tremendous means for organising disorganising and reorganising social relations. It can be a powerful lever for revolution or a tool for organised stagnation, depending upon the hands that control it" (Trotsky, vide Corrigan, 1978 :71).

In Russia, for example, Trotsky pointed to the principal contradiction between technological backwardness and proletarian hegemony and maintained that because this contradiction was not resolved the proletarian dictatorship degenerated into bureaucratic dictatorship. The failure of some theoreticians like Plekhanov to see social, political and ideological factors as mediating agencies

in the development of productive forces and to consider revolution as a permanent phenomenon led Trotsky to break with economism. As Lowy clarified : "Trotsky explicitly rejected the economism (the tendency to reduce in a non-mediated and one-sided fashion, all social, political and ideological contradictions to the economic structure) which was one of the hall marks of the Plekhanovian interpretation of Marxism. Indeed Trotsky's break with economism was one of the decisive steps towards the theory of permanent revolution" (Lowy, 1981 : 49). Further, Lowy quoting from Trotsky's Results and Prospects says, "To imagine that the dictatorship of the Proletariat is in some way automatically dependent on the technical development and resources of a country is a prejudice of economic materialism simplified to absurdity. This point of view has nothing in common with Marxism" (Lowy, 1981 : 49).

Of particular importance in this regard is Trotsky's rejection of the concept of stagist revolution. In essence stagist revolution, which devides the process of revolution into stages i.e. bourgeois democratic and socialist in accordance with the development of forces of production, has implications for mobilization, timing of revolution, and, evolving the forms of struggles.

Further, Trotsky's analysis of the Marxist problematic of base-superstructure is quite relevant to the problems faced by many communist parties who have evolved their perspectives and formulated strategies and tactics according to the scheme of stagist revolution. Trotsky claims that he is within the confines of Leninism in arguing for a permanent uninterrupted revolution in terms of the requirements of seizure of power irrespective of the stage of development of productive forces, presuming thereby that stages of development are more relevant to the socialist reconstruction rather than to the formulation of a programme for seizure of power by the proletariat and establishing proletarian hegemony. Trotsky's concern seems to be that any tight link-up between stages of development and seizure of power will entail the missing of opportunities. When the crisis in political systems occur and revolutionary situations and power vacuums exist the communist parties are not able to seize the opportunity, because of their being bound up in a stagist scheme.

Mao Tse Tung

Mao Tse Tung, the pioneer of the Chinese revolution, comes next to Gramsci in terms of making innovations in the application of base-superstructure relations to concrete situations. At the risk of simplification I would argue that

we find a sort of mutual confirmation between Mao and Gramsci of the theoretical elaborations of Marxian base-superstructure relation. Both laid a greater stress on superstructural aspects in Gramsci and practical innovations in Mao. Mao's innovations lie in breaking the traditional economistic understanding of the base super-structure in the process of class struggles both in pre-liberation and postliberation China (Corrigan, 1978 : 10). Mao's innovative propositions particularly 'cultural revolution' in all its ramifications, are significant illustrations of Gramsci's concepts.

The central aspect of Mao's theoretical and practical stance is his epistemology. As Corrigan writes : "If correct ideas come from social practice, it is wrong to see a correct theory (a collection of strategic ideas) as more universal than more correct social practice. Moreover, theory cannot deny the possibility of error. The notion of error-free theory is co-extensive with bourgeois era, finding its social image in the work of academic commentators and intellectual critics".

His precepts 'Politics must take precedence over economics', 'from the masses to the masses', or 'the mass line', 'never forget the class struggle', and many others undoubtedly make him a theoretician of superstructure. In

his scheme of revolution and socialist construction, ideology and cultural revolution are prime factors provided they are not separated from simultaneous revolutionisation of the forces of production. This approach to the problematic of forces of production and relations of production was formulated by Mao out of his insights into the activity of peasant associations during his investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan (March, 1927) and developed further in his On Contradictions. In the following quote we see his staunch opposition to mechanistic materialist conception :

> "True, the productive forces, practice and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory and superstructures in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role" (Mao, On Contradictions, S.W. 1 : p. 136 vide Corrigan, 1978 : 31).

His stress on reliance on the masses, learning from their customs and traditions and how they think and act to enable oneself to change and to reorientate them, and his exhortation ; 'Liberate philosophy from the confines of the philosophers' lecture rooms and textbooks and turn it into a sharp weapon in the hands of the masses', are consistently Marxist. For Mao practice is the only source of right knowledge:

> "In all practical work of our party, all correct leadership is necessarily from the masses to the masses. This means take the ideas of the masses (scattered and unsystematic ideas) and concentrate them (through study turn them into concentrated and systematic ideas), then go to the masses and propagate and explain those ideas until the masses embrace them as their own, hold fast to them and translate them into action, and test the correctness of these ideas in such action ... And so on, over and over again in an endless spiral, with the ideas becoming more correct, more vital and richer each time. Such is the Marxist theory of knowledge" (Corrigan, 1978 : 24).

We find a great deal in Mao's theoretical elaboration of Marxism in the light of his political praxis in China that has implications for strategy and tactics of class struggle and revolution in Third World countries particularly India. However, one thing must be clarified. Any simple transposition of Mao's ideas from China to any other country is unwarranted. Take for example the case of India. Historically China was dominated by many imperialist countries i.e. Japan, Germany, Britain, France and the U.S.A. It was a concubine of all these imperialist powers. There were contradictions among all those powers. Unlike in India, no particular colonial power could have established its domination exclusively and create politico-economic structures of any sort. As such the nature of foreign domination in China resulted in disunity, disruption and stagnation in socio-economic life, thus creating a

revolutionary situation inside the country.

Protagonists of Mao's strategy and tactics in India have been right to the extent that they tried to formulate a new strategy and tactics for Indian revolution and gave a new dimension to the Indian communist movement which was otherwise steeped in the parliamentary path. Yet, it can fairly be said that the formulation of a correct line is not enough; what is more important is mobilizing the mass support from within the existing parties and from new sections of the people, based on the forms of struggle that may be historically relevant to Indian conditions, particularly the administrative and representative institutions which though inducted from outside, have taken strong roots and have acquired native character over a period of time. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie, after independence has developed serious stakes in not allowing them to go revolutionary. On the other, the people have developed illusions about them. Although these illusions are ill founded it is a big task to make the oppressed classes think and act towards an alternative. It is, perhaps this aspect of the Indian situation that has led to a shift in the strategies and tactics of the non-parliamentary left in India, particularly the modification of their attitude to the utilisation of bourgeois representative institutions.

Marxist Revolutionary Theory and Parliamentary Democracy

In every class society there exists a progressive class representing the progressive economic laws of the society and a reactionary class against whose existence and survival these progressive laws act. The progressive class propagates economic institutions and political ideas which ensure victory in its struggle against the reactionary forces and establishes such institutions that embody the progressive ideas to consolidate its power. This does not mean that all the views and institutions that exist prior to its victory are abandoned altogether. On the contrary, the peculiar form which the progressive ideas and institutions take is generally derived from previously existing forms but their context arises from and reflects the conditions of existence and interests of the particular class at a given time. The concepts of monarchy, aristocracy and democratic republic and the related representative institutions were there in the epoch of slavery in countries like Greece and Rome, but as Lenin wrote :

> "Whether a monarchy was instituted or a republic it was a monarchy or a republic of the slave owners. All rights were enjoyed by them while the slave was a chattel in the eyes of law, slave owning republics different in their internal organisation. There were aristocratic republics and democratic republics. In an aristocratic republic only a small number of previleged persons

> took part but everybody meant only the slave owners, that is everybody except the slaves '-----' (Lenin, 1979, C.W. Vol. 29, p.480).

Throughout the feudal epoch also the state and its institutions varied from monarchy to democratic republic but always the feudal lord was regarded as the ruler and his was the final say in regard to law, justice and their execution. Yet, in practice, although the conditions of serfs in feudalism differed very little from those of slaves in slave-owning society, the progressive role of the feudal values and institutions opened a wider road for the emancipation of serfs.

Bourgeois democracy and bourgeois parliaments which evolved in the process of struggle between feudalism and the emerging capitalist class had played a positive role in the consolidation and strengthening of the bourgeois regimes. In the process of their struggles against feudalism the capitalist class gave the slogan of liberty and equality and right to property for all, which attracted into its fold the serfs because they hoped to become the owners of the land which they cultivated on behalf of feudal owners.

In this way Marxists pay due regard to the political and economic achievements of the bourgeois epoch. They try

to see where bourgeois democracy stands in the history of social development and human civilization and how it is conditional for proletarian democracy. They feel that they can learn from the success of the bourgeoisie in establishing proletarian power. Thus the positive achievements of bourgeois democracy and bourgeois parliaments provide the Marxists with a model and a methodology for fulfilling their proletarian tasks.

The conquest of power by the bourgeoisie does not end the exploitation of the direct producers by the non-producers but puts it on a different footing. As Blackburn writes :

> "the crucial feature of the labour process under developed capitalism is that surplus value can be pumped out of the direct producer without using physical coercion by the immediate exploiter. This leads to an increasing separation of the process of organisation of production from the organisation of violence or to put it in other terms of economics from politics" (Blackburn, 1977 : 4).

Blackburn is here talking in terms of the separation of the state from civil society in the wake of bourgeois revolution as depicted by Marx in his early writings particularly in the The Jewish Question. The transformation of feudalism, when the state and civil society were a single organized entity, into capitalism had abolished the political character of civil society

by separating the state from it, thus endowing the citizen with a double character.

In the bourgeois state, the citizen enjoys freedom, liberty and equality irrespective of rank, education and wealth, and participates equally in popular sovereignty. As a member of the civil society he, as a man, has the right to private property, religion, education and occupation. Man as a member of civil society is the real living individual and in the state he is the imaginary member of a fictitious sovereignty. This separation on the one hand emancipates man politically while on the other hand it leaves him in the midst of unequal competition among individuals with distinctions. This kind of emancipation being partial, "only when real individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual man has become a species being in this empirical life, his individual work and his individual relationships, only when man has recognised and organised his forces proper (own forces) as social forces so that social forces is no longer separated from him in the form of political force, only then will human emancipation be completed" (Marx, Early Writings vide Mukherjee, 1981 : 219).

Marx and Engels

The analysis of the functioning of the bourgeois state and bourgeois parliaments, has been the starting point for Marx, Engels and all Marxists for exploring the course of action open to the proletariat. Marx called the democratic representative state as the culmination of bourgeois political power. Although he discussed the nature and specific features of the bourgeois state in The Communist Manifesto, its analysis in economic terms or in terms of relations of production appears in The Capital. The crucial questions in this context examined by Marx are : How a change in the relations of production changes the nature of exploitation from coercion of the direct producers in the slave and feudal societies to a subtle and deceptive appropriation of surplus labour in the bourgeois society where the labourers submit voluntarily to exploitation; how the various welfare activities not only direct the attention of the people from the monopoly of the state in violence and coercion but also make the state the arbiter and guarantor of the social formation.[10] Identifying the emergence of the bourgeois revolution and how the modern police and armed forces justified the collection of heavy public taxes, although the essential function of monopolised violence is

revealed only in times of crises like civil war, revolution etc.

Many of Marx's ideas on the constitutional and institutional aspects of the bourgeois state appear in The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, and Class struggles in France. He characterised constitutional republic as the dictatorship of the united exploiters who unite around it for protection and liberty from encroachment by the exploited. Rights and liberties in such a constitution are always provided with strings and limitations so much so that they can be enjoyed only by the possessing classes and each provision contains its own antithesis : for instance upper and lower houses of the legislature lead to 'freedom in general phrase and abolition of freedom in marginal note'. Thus although formal sovereignty rests in the constitution itself, the physical guarantor of each and every provision is the executive and the repressive power of the state.

This aspect of Marx's analysis can be applied, with modifications, to any constitution in a bourgeois state including the ones in the ex-colonial societies. It is not surprising that the Britishers provided such a constitution for the Indian dominion through various acts particularly the Government of India Act, 1935 which, as one nationalist

commented, gave rights with the right hand and took them away with the left.

Lenin

By far the most authoritative analysis of the bourgeois State that has been made after Marx and Engels is that of Lenin in 'The State and Revolution', 'The Proletarian Revolution and Renegade Kautsky' and 'Thesis on Bourgeois Democracy and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat'. Lenin's analysis takes into account the experiences of the Paris Commune, various trends in the Second International and the October Revolution in Russia.

Why the exploitation of labour by capital is ensured and the omnipotence of wealth goes well with a representative state in any form of government has been explained by Lenin as follows :

> "The reason why the omnipotence of wealth is more certain in a democratic republic is that it does not depend on individual defects in the political machinery or on the political shell of capitalism and therefore once capital has gained possession of this very best shell..... It establishes its power securely, so firmly, that no change of persons, institutions or parties in the bourgeois democratic republic can shake it" (Lenin, 1972 : 15).

According to Lenin the bourgeois democratic institutions, whatever be their form, only legitimise the exploitation

while the oppressed and exploited are allowed, once in every few years, the opportunity to choose which particular representative of the oppressing class shall represent them and oppress them in parliament. Wealth exercises its power indirectly through the corruption of the officials and alliance with the stock exchange and by way of controlling various other fields of activity like press, communication, etc. As he writes "capital manifests its power in one way where one form exists; and in another way where another form exists - but essentially the power is in the hands of the capital, whether there are voting qualifications or some other rights or not, or whether the republic is democratic or not - in fact the more democratic it is the cruder and more cynical is the rule of capitalism -- once the capital exists it dominates the whole society, and no democratic republic and franchise can change its nature" (Lenin, 1965 : CW, 485-86).

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that all electoral reforms, or constitutional amendments that have taken place in regard to forms of government in various bourgeois constitutions, including the Third World countries, in the last few decades conform to what Lenin has said. This means, by implication, that even reforms

pioneered by the left parties, who come to power by electoral means and want to change the social structure in favour of social revolution within a bourgeois framework, will not be of any use, unless the domination of capital is not dealt with by extra-constitutional and extra-parliamentary means.

Lenin discusses in his "Theses on Bourgeois Democracy" and the "Dictatorship of the proletariat (1919)" how the possessing classes control the various activities that are known to be the attributes of bourgeois democracy i.e. freedom of press and assembly, rule of law and equal justice for all by an independent judiciary. Although the bourgeoisie advances the slogan of democracy, especially genuine, non-class democracy and appeals to the workers to adopt these appeals and slogans it only helps it to cover the naked suppression of democratic rights by coercion and the logic of capitalist relations of production. Lenin shows how the above elements of democracy in general are empty.

In the bourgeois state only the possessing classes have the means and leisure to engage in politics and exercise the right of assembly. The press is owned and run by the rich, the biggest stocks of paper are controlled by the rich and publishing houses, editors and writers are at their disposal, thus making the bourgeois democratic rights an illusion for the non-possessing classes. The same

is also true about the right to justice and rule of law as bourgeois jurisprudence protecting man's innate rights go well with the exploitation of labour by capital. Above all stand the army and the reserve police which are alienated from the common people but are always at the disposal of the bourgeoisie for applying violence and force in accordance with bourgeois legality and bourgeois liberal constitution.

Lenin thus argues that what some socialists do not understand is that whenever the class struggle intensifies or a civil war takes place there is no alternative to the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie or dictatorship of the proletariat and that without establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat it is not possible to deprive capital of all these advantages and privileges. Another theoretical error on the part of the socialists according to him is that ever since the concept of democracy appeared, its content has changed in accordance with changing ruling classes who applied it in different ways at different times. In his words :

> "It would be sheer non-sense to think that the most profound revolution in human history, the first case in the world of power being transferred from the exploiting minority to the exploited majority, could take place within the time-worn framework of the old, bourgeois, parliamentary democracy, without drastic changes, without the creation of new forms of democracy, new institutions that embody the conditions for applying democracy" (Lenin, 1966 : 475).

Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemberg discussed the nature of bourgeois legality, the violence embodied in the bourgeois state, and problems and prospects of bourgeois society. Her views in this regard, though controversial, are very useful in understanding the developments in the capitalist state i.e. its sustenance, survival and crises. About bourgeois legality and bourgeois violence she said:

> "What presents itself to us as bourgeois legality is nothing but violence of the ruling class, a violence raised to an obligatory norm from the outset. Once the individual acts of violence have been raised in this way to an obligatory norm, then the process may be reflected in the mind of the bourgeois jurist (and no less in the mind of the socialist opportunist) not as it really is, but upside down : the 'Legal order' appears as an independent creation of abstract justice, and the coercive violence of the state as a mere consequence, a mere sanctioning of the law. In reality, the truth is exactly the opposite : bourgeois legality (and parliamentarism as legality in the process of development) is itself only a particular social form expressing the political violence of the bourgeoisie, a violence which has grown up out of the given economic base".[11]

Her views in regard to bourgeois legality and her attitude to the violence are useful in making the working class aware of the fact that violence is the basis of bourgeois legality at all times-peace, civil war and crisis. The views also dispel their false perception of violence and a feeling of guilt which pulls the proletariat back from waging violent struggles against the bourgeois state.

About the prospects of bourgeois democracy and capitalist state, Luxemberg thought that the bourgeoisie still find the mechanisms of universal suffrage and other representative institutions as instruments of legitimation and stabilization. The bourgeoisie still dominates the working class by consent, whether that consent is misleading or manipulated. But it does this job not by revealing the essential nature of the bourgeois system to the masses but by concealing it subtly and deceptively, notwithstanding the fact that bourgeois institutions have lost their historical function even from the bourgeois point of view. She, along with Trotsky, pointed out that the reactionary nature of the bourgeois system is concealed by a network of political superstructure i.e. elections, parliamentary debate, committee system and even some elements of proletarian democracy i.e. trade unions, workers parties and workers participation in the management of factories, as much as the wage form conceals the exploitation of labour by capital. Further, in the advanced capitalist countries the bourgeoisie leans more and more towards support of the working class and attracts them by reforms. The working class is also diverted by reformist parties like the Labour Party in Britain and even the conservatives who also initiate reforms pragmatically to pacify the workers. An interesting thing, however, is that reform measures put

forward by socialist or labour reformists serve as a better safeguard for bourgeois institutions than those put forward by the conservative parties whose nature is clearly exposed to the workers. Thus the capitalist class has been using bourgeois democracy and reformist movements of the left like that of the Labour Party effectively[12] in Britain to arrest the revolutionary progress which has been haunting it for over a century (Norman Geras, 1977 : 310-312 Passim).

The experience of Chile and Indonesia illustrates that when the working class leadership does not yield and goes ahead with its revolutionary programme, the bourgeoisie will react in such a manner that it gets the movement smashed physically and ideologically (Miliband, 1973; Murthy, 1975; Namboodripad, 1983).

It is, therefore, obligatory on the part of Marxists to examine political institutions in a dialectical historical perspective for evolving any policy in relation to them. This is necessary because some Marxists tend to blur the distinction between bourgeois democracies and authoritarian regimes, perhaps out of the fear that otherwise it would be difficult to develop a critique of the class limitations and inherent shortcomings of bourgeois democracy. Such a distinction, they fear, may also conceal the fact that bourgeois democracy can be turned with the assent and

encouragement of ruling classes into authoritarian and fascist regimes.

It is also to see the process of development of class consciousness and class struggle from a historical dialectical perspective by distinguishing the consciousness of the advanced cadres and that of the workers and peasants, and various groups within a class in various historical contexts. The history of proletarian movements the world over has brought out more problems and created new situations, such as failure of revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries and its success in the backward countries like China and Vietnam which have made the Marxists modify the premises and propositions advanced by Marx and Engels. By far the most controversial problem in this regard is the nature of the success of revolution in Russia and countries led by it (Bettelheim, 1974, 78). Interestingly the Chinese Revolution has become a matter of controversy on more or less the same lines. The limitations of Chinese Revolution which were focussed in classical Marxist debates particularly by Trotskyites (Beams, 1978 : 7-22) have now become the bone of contention in the debate among academicians concerned with socialist revolution particularly Charles Bettleheim and Felix Green. Surprisingly, many revolutionary groups in India which have tried to emulate the revolutionary strategy

of Mao have also come forward with criticism of the policies of the new leadership in China.

One of the problems which the Communist face, in addition to the unending controversy at the theoretical level mentioned above, is how far bourgeois ideas and institutions can be utilized for mobilising and preparing the working class and other oppressed classes both to expose the hollowness of these institutions and to drive home the necessity of waging a class struggle outside them by attacking their material foundation. The crucial point is that unless the oppressed classes do not shed their illusions about the efficacy of the lower forms of struggle they cannot see the necessity of the higher forms of struggle. It is not enough that the conscious and leading cadre of the proletarian party are thoroughly convinced that bourgeois institutions have become obsolete; it is the masses, who actually conduct the act of destroying the old institutions about which they have illusions, who must be thoroughly convinced of that in the process of their daily life. Parliamentarism, though based on bourgeois democracy, is one of the tactics that can be used to educate the oppressed class towards that consciousness, notwithstanding the controversy over the continuous use of this tactic.

In their comprehensive revolutionary programme with the ultimate objective of winning political power, the

communists combine legal and extra-legal work, outside and inside the Parliament in a revolutionary way, subserving their programme executed independently. Whatever tactics they evolve depend on the objective factors in the society and the level of consciousness - the subjective factor - of the people in a given situation. That is, the characterisation of the nature of the state, the stage of economic development and class formation, the alliance of class forces and the cultural ethos together become a primary question and formulation of tactics accordingly become secondary. Any disregard of this may result in adventurism which eventually leads to disillusionment.

Yet this issue has not been free from controversy in the communist movement the world over and in India where a broad based participation in parliament and other representative institutions at federal, state and local levels has become possible since the fifties. But what is important in the study of the controversy is that the tactics such as participation in bourgeois parliaments and trade unions should be judged in terms of the overall strategy and theory of the communist parties and not in isolation. Tactics change from time to time and situation to situation and it is not un-Marxian if tactics go wrong, although the formulation of a wrong theory has far reaching consequences. A comprehensive treatment of the programmes

should enable one to see whether a programme hightens the consciousness of the people and sharpens the class struggle resulting in the development of a revolutionary situation or vice-versa.

Conclusion

The aim of this Chapter has been to evolve a broad framework for reviewing the problems and prospects of communist parties working within the framework of bourgeois-liberal democratic societies for achieving socialist revolution in various countries. The specific objective is to understand the problems which the left parties in India are facing in advancing the communist movement and class struggle and heightening the revolutionary consciousness of the various oppressed classes by initiating struggles on various fronts.

I have discussed the Marxist approach to the understanding of ideas and institutions particularly political ideas and institutions, with particular reference to the controversy about the base-superstructure relationship. The main intention here has been to come to grips with the objective situation, relations of production, existence of various classes, the class conflict and possibilities of advancing the class struggle in a particular historical

context in terms of the debate among the major Marxist theoreticians particularly Engels, Lenin, Plekhanov, Trotsky, Gramsci and Luxemburg and academicians like C. Wright Mills, Barry Hindess and Mclellan. While Engels, Lenin and Plekhanov found no basic problem with the main propositions of Marx, Gramsci and Carl Boggs have been critical of the inadequacies of the Marxist problematic of base - superstructure and Marx's emphasis on economic factors in social development. Similarly, academicians like C. Wright Mills accepted the basic propositions of Marx and Engels for the purposes of studying a specific and objective situation and formulating revolutionary programmes while Barry Hindess contended that the imagery of base-superstructure and economic determination of Marx will be inadequate for application to practical problems of alliances of class forces, forms of struggles, particularly in countries having parliamentary forms of government. I argue here that the points raised by Hindess are relevant to the growing complexity of classes and increasing problems of specific sections like students and women in most of the present day societies. May be, the failures of some communist parties have to be understood in terms of their application of the Marxist base-superstructure analysis in a technical fashion.

Footnotes

1. The reference is to the experiment of the parliamentary road to socialism like that under the leadership of Salvador Allende in Chile which was overthrown in a coup and also that of the path taken by the CPI in India in particular and the Khruschev line adopted by various parties the world over in general. Included in this category are the Communist Parties of Italy, France and Spain who have dropped dictatorship of the proletariat from their programmes and have adopted, as they claim, the concepts of hegemony, pluralism and multi-party system of Gramsci although Gramsci's hegemony has nothing to do with Communist pluralism. For further reference in this regard see Paolo Filo Della Terre, et. al. 1979 : 10-23.

2. The reference is to various shades of the New Left in France, Britain and Latin America and also some of the extremist groups in India like Central Organising Committee (COC), OCCR, UCCRI(ML) particularly before 1977 and groups which are continuing to boycott elections.

3. Parties in this category are, CPI(ML), UCCRI(ML) in India. The CPI(ML) participated in Assembly elections in 1977 and in 1981. For further information see Mukherjee (1983) where the author has discussed the shift in the strategy and tactics of these parties after the elections of 1977. See also C.P. Reddy, Attitude Towards Opposition Bourgeois Parties and Bourgeois Election Alliances : Lessons from Past History of the International Communist Movement, Central Committee : CPI(ML), 1982.

4. Either for reasons of their theories and strategies or for reasons of tactics and practice Allendie's line of peaceful and parliamentary path to socialism in Chile and that of CPI in India which is not rigid about peaceful or violent or revolutionary path and CPI(M) which, for the present, concentrates on participation in the assemblies and parliament and formation of governments within the bourgeois framework, the practices of these parties have not resulted in revolutionary strides. On the other hand the various shades of New Left - The New Left influenced by the writings of Franz Fanon in Sweden, and those influenced by Jean Paul Sartre and Herbert Marcuse, the various student movements in Latin American countries like Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, Columbia and Mexico in 1966,

the student movement which evolved into Socialistiche Deutsche Student Bond (SDS), the Maoist movement under the leadership of Mori and Miss Nagata in Japan and the very long and protracted movement in Brazil under Carlos Marighella, Che Guevara and Regis Debray ever since 1952, have dwindled like dodos. The Maoist movement in India, in spite of substantial gains, is yet to consolidate as a nationwide and popular phenomenon and to acquire due legitimacy. For further reference in this regard, see Jha (1982).

Among the extremists the crux of the issue is whether to take part in the parliaments in a limited way or to totally boycott them. Among those who want to concentrate on the struggles within the parliamentary arena which may have to be supplemented by outside struggles, the issue is whether to influence and mould the policies of the government so as to create favourable circumstances - both changes in the socio-economic structure such as relations of property and production and broad based development of national capitalism - or to use the participation in elections as a means of disseminating socialist ideas and to impart training in class struggles and also to demonstrate popular support to the communist movement.

5. Lenin, on and off, cautioned against such a tendency. For him, the question of methods and forms of struggle must be investigated and decided primarily from a historical view point. A neglect of this will only undermine the theoretical foundation of dialetical materialism and dialectics of class struggle. The primary and secondary or supplementary methods of struggle should vary according to the stage of economic evolution and the specific political economic, cultural, social and other considerations. To say something decidedly regarding any method of struggle without reference to the concrete circumstances at the given stage of development will be abandoning Marxism altogether (Lenin, CW, Vol. X : 85-87).

6. Although the superstructure is an extremely complex social formation and many factors, which interact, influence its actual development and its varying forms in every period, "What else does the history of ideas prove than that intellectual production changes its character in

proportion as material production is changed" (Marx and Engels, 1948, Chapter-2). Society and the form of institutions are influenced by the changes in techniques of production, scientific discoveries but the nature of the dominant views and institutions depends on the type of economic structure and "the ways in which changes in techniques and scientific discovery receive expression in the views and institutions of society always depends upon the type of production relations". Thus, techniques of production remain the same in capitalist and socialist relations of production although laws and social and political institutions change (Cornforth, Vol. 2 : P. 81; Konstantinov, 1954, 30, 34).

7. See Adorasky (1949 : 29-31), who says "Slavery is abominable. But slavery at a given phase of historical development of humanity was progressive in the remotest past, at a given level of development of productive forces "..... When enemies instead of being killed were turned into slaves and their labour power was thus preserved and put to use". Compared with the serf system, capitalism was beneficial as it, to a certain extent, freed the toilers and placed them in favourable condition for their development and their class struggle for emancipation. Thus, in the case of political ideas and institutions in pre-revolutionary Russia, for the proletariat bourgeois democracy was, of course, preferable to a tsarist autocracy.

8. Clarifying the point Engels wrote : "We regard economic conditions (the material factors) as the factor which ultimately conditions historical development ---political judicial, philosophical, religious literary, artistic, etc., development is based on economic development. But all these react upon one another and also upon the economic basis. It is not that the economic condition is the cause and alone active, while everything else is only a passive effect. There is, rather interaction on the basis of economic necessity, which ultimately always asserts itself". (Engels, Letter to H. Starkenburg, January 25, 1894).

9. An attempt in line with Gramsci's approach has been made to study the problems which the Indian peasantry faced from the leadership of the middle and rich peasantry

in securing organisational autonomy and cultural hegemony in their struggle against the indigenous vested interests and colonial domination, see Guha (1982) and also Arnold (1984).

10. "In a capitalist society the mechanism of value, market and the rate of profit operate in an opaque and mysterious fashion on a global scale bringing vast population into contact with each other. However, this fundamental characteristic of economic relations in capitalist society is partly concealed by an ideology which insists on a few simple direct relationships that between the workers and the boss, between the buyer and the seller, one group of workers and another in competition with them. But,in each case the truth about such relationships can only be unravelled by reference to the context as a whole. By contrast, the state apparatus is said to be governed by abstract principles - the rule of law, constitutional formulae, the mechanisms of popular representation. In reality the state constitutes a sphere of compressed and direct authority within a given territory, constituted by chains of command, orders, police patrols, prison bars frontier guards. It is because the state is an instrument of this sort that it brings all social classes into direct relations with one another". (Blackburn, 1977 : 43).

11. Rosa Luxemberg, Gesammette Work IV Berlin, 1928 vide Paul Frolich (1972 : 68-69), Etienne Balibar writes in the same tone in On the Dictatorship of the Proletariat (Balibar, 1977 : 66-76).

12. Tom Nairn, presenting a profile of the Labour Party in Britain said that because of its programmatic weaknesses like isolating militant communists in the labour movement in the one hand and the absorbing capacity of the bourgeois order on the other, the labour party was enfeebled to the point of revolutionary impotency (Tom Nairn, 1977) and the argument, throughout, echos only what Rosa Luxemburg said.

CHAPTER - III

MARXISM AND PARLIAMENTARISM

The source of controversy among Marxists regarding the utilization of bourgeois parliaments and participation in elections in order to form governments is both theoretical and tactical. Theories evolved from time to time by the bourgeoisie to attract the working class, such as democratic socialism and Fabian Socialism, and tactics utilized by them such as introducing workers' participation in the management of factories have inihibited some Marxists from evolving genuinely Marxist revolutionary programmes.

The differences among the various currents within Marxist thought arise because of their objective roots, depending on whether a country has been industrialised and whether workers' skills and productivity have developed. Added to this is the diversity of experience in class struggles and specificity of history and national traditions. The diverse nature of the evolution of workers' movement has led to diverse propositions and formulations of theory and practice. However, the tactical differences will be resolved by ideological struggle resulting in the evolution of a commonly acceptable line, if the history of international communist movement is any evidence. As Mandel writes :

> "The First International was a split between Marxists and Anarchists on the question of the need to conquer political power. The Second International was a split between revolutionaries and reformists on a number of questions such as support for national defence in the imperialist countries, support or suppression of the revolutionary struggle of the masses at the precise moment when it was threatening the survival of the capitalist economy and the bourgeois state based on parliamentary democracy. The Third International was a split between Stalinists and Trotskyites (revolutionary Marxists), between supporters and opponents of the theory of permanent revolution and the theory of revolution by states" (Mandel, 1983 : 128).

Thus the ideological differences were always there, although at every stage of the international communist movement there was a dominant trend and followed by majority of the Marxist groups and parties the world over.

Theoretical deviations and distortions within the Marxist camp have led to tactical differences also. The three major trends in Marxism regarding the attitude towards participation in bourgeois institutions and parliaments have been Communist, Anarchist and Social Democratic.

The Anarchist attitude to participation in bourgeois parliaments follows from their attitude to the state and all political activity. Anarchists rejected the state in all its forms and advocated boycotting all political activity such as participation in parliaments,

because that will only be recognising the state. Even the formation of an independent party was felt unnecessary. Thus, there was an agreement among Anarchists and Marxists as regards the aims but complete divergence in terms of achieving those aims.

The Anarchists believed that the working class should abolish the state in a general strike. Marx and Engels repudiated their stand and proposed instead changing the reactionary content of the state only to use it in consolidating the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat. They gave importance to the use of the state and representative institutions in the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism. Without going into a detailed discussion of the anarchist attitude towards parliaments I have concentrated instead on the perspectives of "Left Communists", who have been influenced to some extent by Anarchist doctrines. In what follows I have discussed the views of Marx, Engels, Bernstein, Kautsky, Lenin and Luxemburg in regard to the role of ideas and institutions in general and participation of Marxist parties in borgeois parliaments and other revolutionary institutions in particular.

Marx and Engels

The views of Marx and Engels on the democratic state, universal suffrage and representative institutions in relation

to their use in the advancement of the proletarian movement appear in their writings on the theoretical and practical aspects of the communist movements. Distinguishing the bourgeois democratic republic from other forms of state they observe that the most contradictory aspect in the constitution of bourgeois republic is that on the one hand it gives political power to the workers, peasants and the petty bourgeoisie whose social slavery it wants to perpetuate, and on the other hand it deprives the bourgeoisie of the guarantee of its political dominance and also sanctions them their old social power. On the bourgeoisie it imposes political conditions which constantly help its enemies especially the proletariat and the peasantry, to endanger its power. It demands from the bourgeoisie that it should not seek political revolutions after its social restoration, and from the proletariat that it should not seek social emancipation as a result of its political emancipation. (Miliband, 1977 : 77). Thus Marx and Engels saw revolutionary potential in universal suffrage as it obliges the bourgeosie to enlarge franchise, terminates its own power and destroys its own authority periodically.

Engels wrote in 1895 that although universal suffrage was questioned in France by the Bonapartist Government and was not accepted by the opposition parties of

workers in Spain and Latin American countries because they considered it a snare and an instrument of government trickery, the experience of workers was different in Switzerland and Germany. In Germany when Bismarck introduced universal suffrage for the elections to the North-German Reichstag in 1871, the workers took part in elections and sent August Bebel to the first constituent Reichstag and from then onwards the workers used the franchise in the advancement of revolutionary movement in all the countries. Engels further pointed out that the French Marxist programme to which Marx wrote the preamble, transformed franchise from a means of deception to a means of emanicipation. Apart from providing an opportunity for counting numbers of workers and estimating the strength of the workers parties every three years, accurately informing them of their own and other parties strength and safeguarding them from untimely timidity as much as from untimely foolhardiness, elections also provided the workers a means, second to none, of getting in touch with the masses where they still stood aloof and of exposing the ideology and activities of all other parties.

Yet, Marx's position is not free from controversy. How is it that reformism in many countries had widespread support of workers and prevented them from waging higher

struggles for emanicipating themselves socially? Although it is said that Marx, in his later writings, changed his earlier position and argued that the fetishised nature of capitalist social relations create ideological forms of mystification which significantly conceal the basic features of the capitalist mode of production, this kind of interpretation of Marx's writings is still subject to debate, because a reading of his later writings will show that his optimism about the working class acquiring revolutionary consciousness and his emphasis on parliamentary forms of struggle made him understimate the reformist tendencies to which both bourgeois and social democratic movements (Parties) were prone. Juxtaposing Marx's early and later writings Carol Johnson writes that Marx's "belief that proletarian revolutionary consciousness will develop in a relatively straight forward way under capitalism, and his argument, in his later economic writings, that the fetishised nature of capitalist social relations gives rise to forms of ideological mystification which significantly conceal the basic features of the capitalist mode of production" shows the persistence of the contradiction about proletarian consciousness. What Johnson argues is that rather than revising his earlier perspectives concerning the relative ease with which proletarian consciousness would develop,

Marx maintained an essential consistency between his later and earlier views. As a consequence, Marx gravely underestimated the seriousness of the widespread support for reformism that was already becoming evident towards the end of his life; he therefore failed to deal adequately with what remains the most serious problem facing revolutionaries in the advanced capitalist countries. (Johnson, 1980 : 70-71).

Johnson suggests that the working class support for reformism which Marx derived from the theory of fetishism is not the only cause of failure of revolution in the Western countries : "On the contrary a whole host of historical and conjunctural factors can be seen as contributing to such reformis.....". The role of the political institutions of bourgeois democracy, itself being the lynchpin of capitalism in which political and economic orders are formally separated, represents the totality of the population, abstracted from its distribution into classes. Moreover, the parliament appears as the sovereign expression of popular will even though the masses are barred from participating in it by dint of their economic status.

However, Marx depicts the mystification of capitalist relations as belonging to the early stage of capitalism. Once capitalism matures parliamentary rule and universal suffrage are depicted as potentially very

dangerous forms of class rule for the bourgeoisie, because the illusions concerning the nature of universal suffrage and parliamentary rule would soon disintegrate with industrial progress. Marx also stressed "the need for forms of struggle that defetishised the nature of bourgeois relations by making them appear to be not natural relations but what they really are". One such form of struggle was the producer co-operative movement which enabled the workers to realise that wage labour was merely a historically specific, transitional form. After Marx, another important form of struggle has arisen viz., worker's control over the factories which can help the workers "build a struggle over partial demands into a challenge to the worker's alienation from, and lack of control over, the means of production". The direction of Johnson's thinking is in line with what Robin Blackburn recently suggested, that if Marx and Engels did not go on to develop an emphasis on extra-parliamentary forms of struggle it was chiefly because they did not see more advanced actions by the working class such as national strikes, factory occupation or the establishment of workers soviets. But Johnson points out that though Marx could have taken note of the importance of the idea of a general strike he instead attacked Bakunin for his adherence to this tactic.

Whatever be the arguments on this point, it can be said that the revolutionary experience during Marx's time was meagre and historical materialism demanded formulations and suggestions of tactics and slogans on the basis of objective experience. Moreover, the revolutionary leaders in various countries drew much from the insights of Marx and developed new forms of struggle to suit the historical conditions in which they led struggles, without deviating from the basic features of Marxism.

Social Democrats and Marxist Reformism

During the latter half of the 19th century there developed in Western Europe mass labour parties and powerful trade unions. This development was most marked in Germany, which became the seat of what C. Wright Mills would call Socialist Revisionaries but generally called Social Democrats. Social Democrats advocated a mass party for educating the working class so that its members would understand the reasons for voting them into power. The main concern of social democracy was how to instal socialism in advanced capitalist countries having parliamentary political systems. This is generally refered to as legal and evolutionary socialism. The main representative of this trend was Edward Bernstein. Bernstein believed that a socialist party enrolling a major section of the electorate

and linked with trade unions and co-operatives can achieve socialism within a liberal democratic framework by using constitutional means i.e. without revolution.

As the working class got more and more opportunities they could use the labour unions and socialist parties as agencies of reform, making a gradual advancement towards revolution. For this gradual advancement, the movement became everything and maintaining and advancing this movement towards socialism could be done without smashing the bourgeois state. Socialism could be achieved without the use of force - by emancipation through economic reorganisation. Of course Bernstein took his own inspiration from Engels' 'Preface to the Class Struggles in France' in which Engels said that working class must be educated for democracy.

Bernestin

The most important aspects of Bernstein's economic philosophy are: revision of the theory of value in an attempt to synthesize it with the marginalist theory of value and rejection of the idea that with the growth of capitalism, concentration of wealth would increase. He was influenced by Fabian economists such as Shaw and Webb who were adherents of marginalist doctrines in which value is

equated with utility and is considered to be dependent on individual desires and relationship of supply and demand'. Under the influence of the marginalist theory of value Bernstein was inclined to consider value as having no objective existence and as simply a quantitative relation between use values. As such for Bernstein, Marx's theory of value can claim accpetance as purely a speculative formula inadequate to give an account of the total value of social production. Hence his attempt to synthesize Marxist and marginalist concepts of value.

Bernstein believed that the growth of financial institutions like cartels, trusts, syndicates and monopoly capital would advance the socialisation of production and separation of the ownership from control and result in the increase in the number of capitalists. Alongside this development small and medium firms did not disappear but flourished. As for the implication of this for the prospects of socialism, Bernstein writes :

> "It is quite wrong to assume that the present development of society shows a relative or indeed absolute dimunition of number of members of the possessing classes. Their number increases both relatively and absolutely. If the activity of the social democracy were dependent on decrease of the 'Wealthy' then it might indeed lie down to sleep. But contrary is the case. The prospects of socialism depend not on the decrease but on the increase in social wealth".

Bernstein believed that the crisis in capitalism was inevitable and the existence of financial institutions like trusts, cartels syndicates etc., ensured that capitalism would survive almost indefinitely; this harmonious development of capitalism could lead uninterruptedly to socialism (Maclellan, 1979 : 27).

Bernstein's theoretical arguments include refutation of Kautsky's thesis that the development of capitalism will ensure the numerical increase in the working class, implying the possibility of getting electoral majority in the parliament. He argued that the peasantry and the middle class were not disappearing. Small businessmen were not eliminated and the industrial working class was far from being an overwelming majority of the population. Moreover, even if the numbers of the working class increased it was not necessary that they would be willing to fight for socialism. In England, capitalist industrial development did not necessarily lead to the growth of socialist consciousness among the working class. He doubted the capacity of the working class to take responsibility for production on their own.

His theoretical arguments implied that rather than directing political tactics towards utopian goals of a fully socialist society the socialist party should aim at practical and realisable objectives leading in a broadly socialist direction. Since capitalism was working to produce an

automatic political majority, the achievement of practical and realisable objectives must depend on the construction of political alliances between social democrats and other parties.

For Bernstein"..... the law or the path of legislative reform is the slower way, and revolutionary force, the quicker and more radical. But that is true only in a restricted sense. Whether legislative or revolutionary method is more promising depends entirely on the nature of the measures and their relation to different classes and customs of the people". (Miss, 1972 : 181). On the whole a revolutionary way, in the sense of revolution by violence does quicker work, in so far as it removes obstacles which a privileged minority places in the path of social progress; its strength lies in its destructiveness. Constitutional legislation works more slowly; its path is that of compromise. "But it is stronger than the revolutionary scheme where prejudice and limited horizon of the great mass of the people appear as hindrances to social progress, and it offers greater advantage where it is a question of the creation of permanent economic arrangements capable of lasting; in other words, it is best adapted to positive social work". (Ibid. 183). Thus, Bernstein does not clearly prefer peaceful to revolutionary methods or vice verse and this

makes him vulnerable to the charge of opportunism, because this kind of argument gives scope for the formulation of unprincipled strategies and tactics. Thus he says that as soon as a nation has attained a position where the proprietory class ceases to be a serious obstacle to social progress, where the negative or destructive tasks of political action are less pressing than the positive, then the appeal to revolution by force becomes a meaningless phrase.

For Bernstein democracy meant absence of class government and not absence of classes. This ruled out any oppression of the individuals by the majority. Universal suffrage would ensure the subjection of the state to popular control. He writes :

> "The right to vote in a democracy makes its members virtually partners in the community, and this partnership must in the end lead to real partnership. With the working class underdeveloped in numbers and culture the general right to vote may long appear as the right to choose 'the butcher'; with the growing number and knowledge of the workers it is changed, however, into the implement by which to transform the representatives of the people from masters into real servants of the people". (Bernstein, 1961 : 144).

For example, Bernstein would say, the Prussian anti-socialist law in which Bismark used universal suffrage as a tool but finally it compelled Bismark to serve it as a tool.

About the forms of struggle, Bernstein considered the mass strike useful for both political and economic ends to bring the strongest pressure to bear on the government and public opinion as well, but only in special circumstances when the legal forms of struggle were blocked to workers. In fact in a fullfledged democracy the political strike would be an outmoded weapon. Further, given the modern weapons, "the days of street fights and barricades are over; the workers cannot win battle in such ways". Thus Bernstein's revolutionary strategy is of exclusive reliance on parliamentary struggles for achieving socialism, and his version of socialism came to be known as legal and evolutionary socialism.

Bernstein had great faith in the potentialities of democracy and this makes him reject the concept of 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. So much so that he said : "in an era of parliamentary democracy talk of the need for a dictatorship is anachronistic, it belongs to a lower civilization" (Ibid. p. 146). Thus Bernstein argued like a liberal democrat in saying that democracy could be a means for the realisation of socialism which would raise the worker out of the social position of a proletarian into

a bourgeois, socialism derived much from liberal democracy. The constant enlargement of social duties and corresponding rights of the individual vis-a-vis the society and vice versa, and democratic decentralization of economic and political life at village, district and provincial levels will result in the realisation of socialism more and more. Further, Bernstein pointed out :

> "The transfer of economic enterprises from private to public control will naturally accompany this development, but it will only be able to proceed slowly.....There can be more socialism in a good factory law than in the nationalisation of a whole group of factories. I admit openly : I have for what is commonly called the final goal of socialism extraordinarily little feeling and interest. This goal, whatever it may be, is nothing to me, the movement is everything". (Bernstein vide Mclellan, 1979 : 31).

Kautsky

Among the social democrats Kautsky is the most controversial figure and his basic propositions are debated even today. Kuatsky was fiercely ciritcal of Bernstein who openly abandoned revolution. Inspite of his unpopularity in later years, Kautsky made important contributions to Marxist theory with his ideas on class consciousness, on imperialism and on the application of Marxist principles to specific historical realms.

Kautsky considered Bernstein's critique of Marx's doctrine of concentration to be the key to his revisionism. Contesting the conclusions of Bernstein on a number of counts, Kautsky wrote that although the number of small enterprises was not necessarily less, their economic domain was decreasing and the lower middle enterprises were on the verge of proletarianisation. Periodic depression would eventually squeeze small business out of existence and only the wealthiest would be able to survive. Whereas Bernstein regarded growth of cartels, syndicates etc., as a means of capitalist self-regulation, Kautsky deemed them to be evidence of the final revolution of the system, the end of free competition and the imminence of a collapse. (Mclellan, 1979 : 28).

Kautsky argued that capitalist development logically leads to the establishment of socialism because of the economic effects of capitalist development on the one hand and its political consequences on the other. The economic consequences of capitalist development are : class polarisation as a result of the decline of the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie, and concentration of capitalist production. Emergence and growth of the organised working class and realisation of its role in its own emancipation which ultimately are the political consequences. This also

results in the irreconcilabilities of the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Kautsky writes :

> "Sooner or later in every capitalist country the participation of the working class in politics must lead to the formation of an independent party, a labour party..... And once formed such a party must have for its purpose the conquest of the government in the interest of the class which it represents. Economic development will lead naturally, to the accomplishment of this purpose". (Hindess, 1983 : 18).

While Kautsky believed that the development of working class will of necessity make it demand political freedom he also argued, like Lenin, that for articulation and achievement of these demands on a sustained basis the working class would need non-utopian political consciousness which could be brought from outside and which would require them to engage in parliamentary struggle. Parliament according to him is the most powerful level that can be utilized to raise the proletariat out of its economic, social and moral degradation. Besides freedom of press and the right to organise, the universal ballot is to be regarded as one of the prerequisites for the sound development of the proletariat. Parliamentary and electoral struggle itself forges the political cohesion of the class.

For Kautsky, the parliamentary state is an instrument of the ruling class but capable of transformation through

parliamentary struggle. While the state works in the interests of the bourgeoisie it allows the working class to influence government activity as parliament is not necessarily a tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie. The working class should struggle to strengthen the parliament and increase their own influence within it. As Hindess comments, "the growing strength and political maturity of the working class means that sooner or later it will obtain a parliamentary majority and the ability to make parliament the dominant element in the state. The socialist transformation is then just a matter of time" (Hindess 1983 : 19). Kautsky emphasises that capitalist development will inevitably lead to socialism so much so that even "if the working class didn't make use of it's mastery over the machinery of the government to introduce the socialist system of production, the logic of events would finally call some such system into being, but only after a useless waste of energy and time". (Hindess, 1983 : 20).

The socialist transformation of society through parliamentary majority need not be accompanied by violence and bloodshed. However, Kautsky was staunchly opposed to any effort on the part of the working class to seek power by way of broadbased alliance of the popular classes the radical bourgeoisie, peasantry, intelligencia and petty

bourgeoisie, as that would have resulted in losing unity and strength of the working class and also losing sight of it's specific objectives. The basic differences between Kautsky, and revisionists like Bernstein have been summed up by Mclellan thus :

> "For Kautsky interpretation of labour theory of value, of impoverishment and polarisation meant that the interests of capital and labour were irreconcilable, that there was no such thing as the national interest, and that the proletariat must preserve its isolation in the political arena. For the revisionists on the other hand who preferred to abandon the labour theory of value, had ceased to believe in the breakdown of capitalism, and pointed to the growth of the middle class as evidence of non polarisation, capitalism has shown itself to be sufficiently adaptable for there to be hope of its gradual transformation into socialism. Socialism was seen as the more or less peaceful inheritor of fully developed capitalism" (Mclellan, 1979 : 30).

Thus, while Kautsky stressed class conflict and class struggle, Bernstein stressed class compromise and class conciliation; for Kautsky parliamentarism could sharpen this conflict and heighten class consciousness; for Bernstein it dissolved class conflict and brought class equilibrium.

In spite of these differences there are certain crucial similarities in the formulations of Bernstein and Kautsky, particularly relating to practice and action. For both, parliamentary democracy is a necessity and the working

class should strengthen the institution of parliament and parliamentary activity to increase its influence and ultimately gain access to state power. Although they differed on the objectives of engaging in parliamentary activity, Bernstein aiming at ultimate dissolution of classes and Kautsky aiming at achieving working class majority, they differed little on the efficacy of parliamentary democracy as a means to the realisation of their objectives. For both, parliamentary democracy could be used to take over the Government of a society by a popular majority; a popular majority backed by popular consent could subject the state machinery to its will.

Notwithstanding, his classical Marxist postures like necessity of class struggle and inevitable victory of the working class, Kautsky believed that the task of Social Democracy consisted not in bringing about the inevitable catastrophe but in delaying it; a party can be revolutionary but it cannot prepare a revolution. Moreover, for Kautsky dictatorship of the proletariat of Marx was not a rule of the poletariat to be achieved by a class war but a rule of the proletariat under fully democratic and parliamentary institutions. It is these weaknesses that made Kautsky to come closer to Bernstein in the end.

Revolutionary Marxism and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat

Conquest of political power and establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat through class struggle have been the most controversial questions that separated the two main trends in the international communist movement i.e. revolutionary and reformist Marxist - Leninist theory and practice, and are the bone of contention throughout its history. Whereas the First International was marked by debates on basic philosophical issues and the concepts of class struggle and the dictatorship of the proletariat were yet to emerge as the immediate concerns, the leading figures and cadres of the communist parties in various countries gained clarity on the efficacy of universal suffrage and political rights secured by bourgeois revolutions in the West during the period of Second International for promoting revolution. While Bernstein and Kautsky held parliamentary methods as efficacious enough in achieving the desired socialist goals, two important figures, one from within the German Social Democratic Party (Luxemberg) and the other from the communist movement in Russia (Lenin) constantly criticised the exclusive reliance on the parliamentary path in terms of

economics, politics and philosophy. They worked out an alternative perspective, which may be called revolutionary Marxism recognising the crucial role of extra parliamentary struggles for the class struggle and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this section I propose to discuss the perspectives of these two leaders, although many others also figure in the discussion. While questions of the programme, strategy and tactics will be discussed in broad terms, I will focus mainly on the efficacy of parliamentary and extra parliamentary struggles including the question of formation of governments with the support of bourgeois parties.

Lenin

Of all the communist leaders who spoke and wrote extensively on practical strategies and tactical questions of socialist revolution Lenin assumes very high importance. Firstly, the historical juncture in which he lived and the active role he played in the class struggles in Russia was preceded by revolutionary struggles in European countries, particularly the parliamentary struggles for political and economic rights of workers and peasants, based on universal suffrage and bourgeois democratic rights. Secondly, he and his colleagues had the advantage of drawing lessons from successful struggles like the Paris Commune and those which

ended in reformist imperialism. All his activity in relation to the Bolshevik revolution and uniting and strengthening the communist movement throughout the world was connected with his struggle against any kind of departure from Marxism. He helped the young cadres of the newly established communist parties. He and the other Bolsheviks played a crucial role in establishing the Communist International, which was geared to the tasks of strengthening the world communist movement ideologically and organisationally against revisionism and reformism on the one hand and 'Left' sectarianism on the other.

The material and economic basis for the revolutionary perspectives of Lenin could be traced to his theory of imperialism which, according to him, emerged as a result of the growth of monopoly capitalism and which manifested itself in the form of finance capital controlled by banks and cartels or trusts as a dominant feature of the advanced economies of the West. As distinct from industrial capitalism associated with export of goods, monopoly or financial capitalism involved export of surplus capital which could not be used with profit at home but could be put to profitable use in backward countries. Unlike Lenin, Kautsky was only concerned with industrial capital and was not aware of the fact that it was financial capital that characterised

imperialism in the main, and because of which the capitalist system could not achieve equilibrium as the cartels and trusts would only increase the differences in the growth of the world economy. The political effects of this tendency were stagnation in technical progress and super-profits, part of which could be used for bringing the upper strata of the proletariat, thus resulting in opportunism and reformism in the labour movement. As against the understanding of the German Social Democratic Party, Lenin held that imperialism was a necessary feature of contemporary capitalism and would lead to war and also revolution, and that imperialism brought world financial capitalism to its final stage and created objective conditions for worldwide revolution.

Much in line with his theory of imperialism, Lenin defined the state simply as an organisation of force for protecting the ruling classes and suppressing the labouring classes. All the institutions of the state, however democratic they might be, subserve this main purpose. The essence of parliamentary democracy in a capitalist state is "to decide once every few years which member of the ruling class is to repress and crush the people through parliament - this is the real essence of bourgeois parliamentarism, not only in parliamentary constitutional monarchies, but also

in the most democratic republics".

The main flaw in the Kautskyite interpretation of Marxism is that although Kautsky held that the state is an organ of class rule and class antogonisms are irreconcilable, he glossed over the fact that if the state is the product of irreconcilability of class antogonisms, if it is a power standing above society and alienaling more and more from it, it is obvious that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of the state power which was created by the ruling class and is the embodiment of this "alienation". (Lenin, 1972 : 10). Lenin consistently argued that if the ancient and feudal states were organs for the exploitation of the slaves and serfs the modern representative state is an instrument of exploitation of wage labour by capital.

The main theme in Marx's 'The Poverty of Philosophy' and 'Communist Manifesto', around which he built his theory, is that the first step in the revolution by the working class "is to raise the proletariat to the position of a ruling class, to win the battle of democracy in which the proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise

all instruments of production in the hands of the state i.e. of the proletariat organised as the ruling class; and to increase the total productive forces as rapidly as possible". (Marx and Engels, vide Lenin, 1965). Lenin clearly draws from this the most important idea of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' - the state of the proletariat organised as the ruling class, and it runs throughout his theory and political practice.

Analysing the revisionist political economy, Lenin opposed the idea that concentration and the ousting of small scale production by large scale production do not occur in agriculture at all, while they proceed very slowly in commerce and industry; that crises had now become rarer and weaker and cartels and trusts would probably enable capital to eliminate them altogether and class antogonisms would become milder and milder. Yet, it became clear to the revisionists that capitalist prosperity was followed by crisis. Lenin wrote :

> "While uniting production, the cartels and trusts at the same time, and in a way that was obvious to all, aggravated the anarchy of production, the insecurity of existence of the proletariat and the oppression of the capital, thereby intensifying class antagonisms to an unprecedented degree". (Lenin, 1966 : 114).

The most vehement criticism of revisionsim by Lenin was made against their understanding of the political taks

of the proletariat : that political freedom, democracy and universal suffrage removed the basis for class struggle and that since the "will of the majority prevails in a democracy, one must neither regard the state as an organ of class rule, nor reject alliances with the progressive, social reform bourgeoisie against the reactionaries" (Lenin, Ibid : 115). Lenin equated this understanding with liberal bourgeois views and bourgeois parliamentarism. Parliamentarism, he held, did not eliminate, but laid bare the innate character even of the most democratic bourgeois republics as organs of oppression. By helping to enlighten and organise wider masses of the people it only intensified crises, and resulted in civil war and political revolutions. Quoting the examples of the Paris Commune in 1871 in France and the events of 1905 in Russia, he explained how the bourgeoisie without hestiation made deals with even the enemies of these nations only to crush the proletarian movements. The experiences of making alliances and forming blocks with social reform liberal groups in western countries - particularly Millerand's experiment in France and the liberal reformist Cadets in Russia - illustrated convincingly that these tactics only blunted the consciousness of the masses and dampened the class struggle rather than sharpening it. (Lenin, Ibid : 115-116).

Yet, while appreciating the social advancement that took place as a result of bourgeois revolutions, Lenin said that a democratic republic and universal suffrage were an immense advance as compared to feudalism in enabling the proletariat in achieving unity and solidarity and to wage firm and systematic struggle against capital. He wrote :

> "Without parliamentarism, without an electoral system this development of the working class would have been impossible. That is why all these things have acquired such great importance in the eyes of broad masses of people. That is why a radical change seems to be difficult".

Yet, bourgeois development has also brought new problems, particularly the omnipotence of capital wherein the power of the capital is everything, the stock exchange is everything, while parliament and elections are marionettes and puppets. (Lenin, 1967 : 55-56).

The views of Lenin show that the problematic of communist, or revolutionary, utilization of parliamentary and other representative institutions has to be understood in the background of the dialectical development of these institutions. Any attempt to formulate programmes, strategies and tactics has to subserve historical and national specificaties in a given country, such as political consciousness of the broad masses and the nature and role of the parliamentary institutions in a particular country. Further, the most important factor is the need to change tactics from situation to situation such as civil war,

external aggression or political crisis because of rivalry among the ruling glasses as also a non-revolutionary situation.

The political implications of rejecting revisionist economics and the political perspective embedded in it were far reaching. The politics of social democratic parties was what is widely known as 'economism'. The political logic of the revisionist theory was that social democracy should concentrate its work not on political struggle of the workers against autocracy but on securing the economic demands of the workers. Lenin saw economism as the abandonment of the hegemony of the proletariat, so that the workers would confine themselves to economic struggles leaving politics to the bourgeoisie.

Further, this rejection of economism on the part of the workers implied the need for political knowledge, political consciousness and political struggles for the ultimate seizure of power. It is this break with social democratic politics, stressing the importance of imparting political education to the proletariat from without, that has been dealt with at length by Lenin in some of his important works : What is to be done? One Step Forward, Two Steps Backward and Two Tactics of Social Democracy. No doubt this theme runs through Lenin's overall revolutionary

strategy and tactics.

After the bourgeoisie acquires dominance in the society and after the revolutionary content of the new institutions is emptied and new contradictions between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat come to the fore, the revolutionary fervour of the bourgeoisie goes down. In brief, it becomes reactionary in order to protect itself and its possessions from the proletariat, which is interested in furthering the revolution. That is why, it is to the advantage of the bourgeoisie to rely on certain remanants of the past and not to eliminate them completely. The bourgeoisie is incapable of being consistently democratic. Even if it takes up some measures for change it will see to it that they "take place more slowly, more gradually, more cautiously, less resolutely by means of revolution". (Lenin, 1977 : 44-45).

On the other hand, Lenin suggestions that it is always advantageous for the working class to aim at revolutionary changes in the bourgeois liberal press, civil and political rights are quite instructive for revolutionary practice in any country with bourgeois liberal ideas and institutions dominating. Lenin also suggests that the parliamentary activity of the working class and its combination with extra-parliamentary struggle should on

the whole subserve the main theme that the revolutionary path is always preferable to the reformatory path and all efforts must be made to adopt such a pateh even within a bourgeois liberal set up to quicken the process of bourgeois democratic revolution.[1]

Lenin is stressing here the distinction between bourgeois democracy which strikes a compromise with feudal and counter - revolutionary elements and bourgeois democracy adopted by the proletariat which fights out the counter revolutionary elements. He suggests that a Marxist, in a bourgeois democratic revolutionary period, should differentiate between the degrees of democratism and reactionary or revolutionary content in those regimes and plan for the fulfillment of bourgeois revolutionary tasks.

As mentioned at the beginning, the question of participation or non-participation in bourgeois parliaments by the communists and forming alliances assumed utmost importance during the period when reformist social democracy was being defeated and radiclas within the German Social Democratic Party were emerging. Lenin and his followers were hammering out an alternative line both to the narcho-syndicalist view which advocated a total boycott of the parliaments and the reformist view which

pleaded for exclusive reliance on parliamentary means of struggle. The controversy was between those who wanted to participate in the parliamentary institutions for enlightening the backward masses by propagating the socialist idea and for proving that parliaments became obsolete not only historically but also politically and those who advocated total boycott of these institutions under the influence of anarcho-syndicalist views, to use Lenin's term.

In Russia this problem acquired prominence in 1908 when the Left deviation within Bolshevism made its presence felt. In 1908 the Left Bolsheviks or otozovists wanted a recall of the Social Democratic deputies. This stand was taken by them in 1905 when the tsar proclaimed the convening of a consultative parliament. The Bolsheviks called for its boycott much against the policy of all other opposition parties and the Mensheviks. The parliament was swept away in the general strike; "the boycott proved correct at the time" wrote Lenin, "not because non-participation in reactionery parliaments is correct in general but because we accurately appraised the objective situation,[2] which was leading to rapid development of the mass strikes first into an uprising" (Lenin, 1968 : 21). This experience illustrated that when legal and extra-legal parliamentary and non-parliamentary struggles are combined it is sometimes useful and even essential to reject parliamentary forms. However,

as Lenin wrote, it would be erroneous to apply the same tactic in other situations as was done in regard to the boycott of the Duma between 1906 and 1908 because the objective situation pointing to the necessity of exclusive reliance on non-parliamentary activities may not obtain.

When 'Left Communists' opposed parliamentary activity in the German Communist Party and called themselves "Opposition on Principle" refused compromise with other parties by participation in parliamentary struggles deeming them to be historically obsolete, Lenin was very critical of this stand. He pointed out that the opposition of the 'Left Communists' in the German Communist Party was wrong. According to him, the Left Communists ignored the fact that the common masses had all their attention to the parliaments wherein all parties with different motives in accordance with the classes they represent. A revolutionary party could not be victorious unless the motives of the various bourgeois parties and the opportunist traitors are not exposed to the broad masses. Lenin explains :

> "Parliamentarism has become historically obsolete, but it is true only in the propaganda sense. However, everybody knows that this is still a far cry from overcoming it in practice. Capitalism would have been declared to be historically 'obsolete' many decades ago, but that does not at all remove the need for a very long and persistent struggle on the basis of capitalism. Parliamentarism is historically obsolete from the standpoint of world

> history i.e. the era of bourgeois parliamentarism is over, and the era of proletarian dictatorship has begun, that is incontestable. But world history is counted in decades. Ten or twenty years earlier or later makes no difference when measured with the yardstick of world history it is a trifle that cannot be considered even approximately. But for that very reason, it is a glaring theoretical error to apply the yardstick of world history to practical politics". (Lenin, 1968 :42).

Lenin clarifies that if parliamentarism had become obsolete the tasks of the left parties would have been very easy. In fact it is only subjectivist formulation of tactics in terms of the consciousness of the leading cadres to say that parliamentarism has become obsolete both politically and historically. We cannot say that "parliamentarism is politically obsolete", when millions and "legions" of proletarians are not only still in favour of parliamentarism, but are downright counter revolutionary. Lenin suggests that the conscious cadres must not sink to the level of the backward strata of the masses, but they must tell the masses the bitter truth. They are in duty bound to call the bourgeois, democratic and parliamentary prejudices of the masses what they are. But at the same time they must soberly follow the actual state of the class consciousness and preparedness of the entire class (not only of the communist vanguard), and of all the working people (not only of their advanced elements). (Lenin, 1968 : 43). Further, the crucial factor, according to

Lenin, is that the masses should not only get rid of illusions about the representative institutions in the process of participation in them but also should realise that extra-parliamentary struggles are more fruitful and result oriented and also that they should have some alternative organs like 'soviets' in Russia. It is with this intention that the Bolsheviks took part in the elections to the Constituent Assembly in September-November, 1917. What Lenin derived from this is that, "far from causing harm to the revolutionary proletariat, participation in a bourgeois parliament, even a few weeks before the victory of the Soviet Republic and even after such a victory, actually helps the proletariat to prove to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be done away with : it facilitates their successful dissolution, and helps to make bourgeois parliamentarism 'politically obsolete', (Lenin, Ibid : 48).

This task would be testing and difficult to a revolutionary party. As Lenin puts it :

> "it is very very easy to show one's revolutionary temper merely by hurling abuse at parliamentary opportunism, or merely by repudiating participation in parliaments; it's very ease, however, cannot turn this into a solution of a very difficult problem. But any attempt to circumvent this into a solution of a very difficult problem. But any attempt to circumvent this difficulty by skipping the difficult job of utilising reactionery parliaments for revolutionary purposes

> would only be childish. To want to create a new society and yet fear the difficulties involved in evolving a good parliamentary group of 'convinced and devoted and heroic communists' in a reactionary parliament would be childish. As regards parliamentary criticism of the left leaders, it is necessary that 'criticism-the most keen, ruthless and uncompromising criticism' - should be directed not against parliament or parliamentary activities, but against those leaders who are unable and still more against those who are unwilling to utilize parliamentary elections and parliamentary rostrum in a revolutionary and communist manner. Only such criticism combined, of course, with the dismissal of incapable leaders and their replacement by capable ones will constitute useful and fruitful revolutionary work....."(Lenin, Ibid : 50).

Lenin held the same views and made the same criticial comments on the attitudes of 'left communists' in Holland, Great Britain and Italy. As he emphasised in all his debates and exchanges with left communists in these countries :

> "the fundamental law of revolution, which has been confirmed by all revolutions and especially by all three Russian revolutions in the twentieth century is as follows : for a revolution to take place it is not enough for the exploited and oppressed masses to realise the impossibility of living in the old way, and demand changes; for a revolution to take place it is essential that the exploiters should not be able to live and rule in the old way. It is only when the lower classes don't want to live in the old way and the upper classes cannot carry on in the way that the revolution can triumph. This can be expressed in other words : revolution is impossible without a nationwide crisis (affecting both the exploited and the exploiters). It follows that, for a revolution to take place, it is essential, first, that a majority of the workers (or at least

> a majority of the class conscious thinking and politically active workers) should fully realise that revolution is necessary, and that they should be prepared to die for it; second, that the ruling classes should be going through a crisis, which draws even the most backward masses into politics, weakens the government, and makes it possible for the revolutionaries to rapidly overthrow it". (Lenin Ibid, 70).

What is clear from the above lines of Lenin is that victory cannot be won by the vanguard alone; that will be putting the cart before the horse. To put only the cadres into the battle without ensuring the support of the majority, the understanding of the oppressed classes and the sympathy of all those who are indirectly affected by the evils of the existing system would be wrong. Propaganda and agitation are not enough to bring the various oppressed classes to such an understanding, because the masses must have political experience which they can gain by participation in parliamentary, non-parliamentary, legal and extra-legal struggles. Whereas for the advanced and conscious cadres, experience comes, more often than not, through consciousness, for the masses experience comes through action and revolutionary consciousness and preparedness come through experience in class struggles. For the advanced and conscious cadres it is the other way round. It is obligatory on the part of the conscious cadres to go down to the level of

consciousness of the masses by adapting every means that is available - a task which is all the more difficult when conditions of direct and open mass struggles do not exist. The real test of a revolutionary party in any country is to adapt to the specific conditions in which the oppressed masses live; to formulate suitable forms of struggle; to work through existing organisations even though the masses who depend on those organisations may have reactionary ideas without being capable of appreciating the need for revolutionary methods of action. In fact the arduous efforts which a party puts in during the non-revolutionary situation taking up the minutest problems with a boradbased programme will ultimately determine the possibility of the victory of revolution when the objective situation arises.

It can be derived from the above discussion that the strength of a party and the sympathy and support of the masses it enjoys and the multifarious contacts which it has with the masses in terms of the above factors and the possibility of making revolution a success can never be measured in terms of its electoral gains, the number of seats it has secured in the representatives institutions or the number of years it has participated in the governments formed within a bourgeois framework. After all, electoral struggles, participation in the bourgeois governments - provided

it allows advancement of class struggle - are a part of the multifarious forms of struggles - general, political and economic strikes, occupation of work places, and work among the industrial and agricultural proletariat, the armed forces, petty bourgeois sections, students, women and aboriginal tribes etc., with relevant tactics and suitable slogans around immediate and long run objectives which require a protracted, extra-parliamentary, educative and voluntary, but organised, work.

Rosa Luxemburg

By far the most articulate and effective opposition to reformist social democracy came from Rosa Luxemburg, the most brilliant intellect of all the scientific heirs of Marx and Engels. Earlier critiques like that of Parvus were confined to pointing to the source of opportunist errors inside the social democratic movement. It was Luxemburg who evolved a comprehensive critique in her Social Reform or Revolution (1899) which to date remains a classic of radical Marxism. Throughout her activity, theoretical and practical, her guiding principle was that there exists an indissoluble tie between social reform and revolution.

This guiding principle was based, of course, on her theoretical understanding. First of all, she rejected

Bernstein's proposition that capitalism had self-regulating capacity in absolute terms. If capitalism did not move in the direction of its self-ruination, sooner or later, socialism ceased to be an objective necessity. In the capitalist growth of the economy, credit increased the contradiction of capitalist society as it accentuated the separation of ownership from production, and cartelisation increased the contradiction between the producer and the consumer, between organised capital and the working class, between the international character of the capitalist world economy and the national character of the capitalist state. Thus the political ideas and activity of Luxemburg in the main were deeply rooted in the notion that socialism could become a reality only if it was possible to prove scientifically that capitalism would be destroyed by its own immanent contradictions.

In defending Marxism and the inevitability of capitalist crises and their political implications she faced the problem of explaining the absence of such a tendency in western and central Europe, particularly the increasing wages of the labourers and increased prospects of employment. Whereas the other political leaders developed doubts about Marxist theory of capitalist crises, she stuck to Marx's idea "that a capitalist thrust into non-capitalist areas was one of the most effective means of overcoming economic

crises, and that capitalism would inevitably perish when there was no longer any possibility of extending the capitalist market" (Frolich, 1971 : 156). Here we find the anticipative nature of her ideas which are now relevant to the problems of the Third World. On the whole her economic theory and political practice were free from both the thoroughly revisionist understanding of Marxism of Bernstein on the one hand, and the fatalistic understanding of Marxism of Kautsky on the other. Her focus was on the historical tendencies of the capitalist system, its inherent weaknesses, recurrent crises and its inevitable but unpredictable collapse on the one hand, and the unending, ongoing, unresolvable class conflict constantly feeding the contradiction between labour and capital on the other. She laid greater stress on trends and historicity of the socio-economic system rather than on excessively subjective emotional factors. (Luxemburg vide Trolich, 158).

In the sphere of political activity her cardinal principle has been a programmatic combination of reform and revolution for organic growth of the movement. Reforms cannot be carried out without a motive power independent of revolution. For Marxists, in every historical period reforms take place only so long as the impetus given by the last upheaval continues to make itself felt. It is a historical and false to regard reform "as a long drawn out revolution, and revolution as reform condensed into a short period of time",

because "a social revolution and legal reform are different movements, not in the space of time they take up, but in their essential characteristics". The secret of historical revolution is a sudden change of quantitative gains, mostly legal reforms, into qualitative ones. This implied that "whoever opts for the path of legal reform, in place of and in contradiction to the conquest of political power, actually chooses not a calmer and slower road to the same aim, but a different aim altogether." (Ibid : 52).

Rejecting the tactics of Bernstein she reconstructed the understanding of Marx and Engels by saying that democracy in a bourgeois set up is dispensable not because it renders superfluous the conquest of political power for the proletariat but because it makes the conquest of political power both necessary and possible; it makes waging of class struggles necessary and possible for the sake of gaining political power. Marx and Engels never had any doubt about the need for conquest of political power.

Thus she was crystal clear in stressing the organic unity of reforms and revolution; she considered the struggle for living standards of the prletariat and expansion of democratic rights within bourgeois under-developed societies as a means for preparing the masses for the revolution, for educating and organising it and making it realise through practical experience that the

bourgeois state had to be overthrown if the proletariat were to be freed from the bonds of wage slavery. Only by participating in a broad - based struggle with the state and in adapting itself to various complex situations and fighting out the difficulties, the working class could get experience and consciousness.

Whereas few Marxists applied Marxist theory creatively to the objective developments on the one hand the subjective reactions on the other, Luxemburg stressed this in all her writings and political practice in regard to mass activity, mass strikes and trade union activity. While criticising Lenin for advocating the control by the Central Committee over the masses in the whole organisation of the party, she advanced her concept of dialectical relationship between the activity organised by the party and the spontaneous activity and outbursts of the masses. While praising the spontaneous nature of the working class demonstrations in Russia, she criticised centralism as the "imperative of the will of the enlightened and fighting vanguard of the working class opposed to its individual groups and members". To her it was "a 'self centralism' of the leading stratum of the proletariat" amounting to a "rule" of the majority within the party organisation". Similarly, while she said that decentralisation was responsible for revisionism in German Social Democratic Party she felt that it did not mean that

the alternative was centralisation which could bring revisionism from the backdoor and lead to a bureacratic atmosphere in the party. (Molyneux, 1978 : 98-99).

Luxemburg thought that only a loose organisational structure of the party could accommodate the spontaneous activity and outbursts of the masses, whose experience and initiative should be the basis for the formulation of tactics in a particular situation. Yet, she showed a clear preference to spontaneity of action (though not of theory). At the same time she accepted the creative leadership of the party which could accommodate the spontaneous initiative of the masses.

Luxemburg's rejection of the role of the organisational leadership and powerful central committee as conservative should be discussed in the light of the various class struggles and revolutions that took place in history. In France the first great revolution of 1789 was spontaneous and that of 1792 was organised; in Russia the struggles of December 1905, of 1906 and of February 1917 were sponatenous and that of October, 1917 was prepared. In all these struggles unconscious action preceded conscious action; the objective revolutionary situation preceded the subjective revolutionary situation logically. (Molyneux, 1978 : 104-106).

In the mass strike Luxemburg found a means of channellising the revolutionary fervour of the masses pulsing with its flesh and blood as against the actions and agitations oreven strikes undertaken at the behest of party decrees cleverly concocted in party meetings. She felt that the mass strike was such a changeable phenomenon that it reflected all phases of a political struggle and factors of the revolution. It could open sudden, new and broad perspectives at times when the revolution seemed to have gone into the bottleneck. At times it could surge over "the whole empire like a gaint wave" and at times would break up into a gaint network of rivulets. She wrote :

> "political and economic strikes, mass strikes, general strikes in individual towns, peaceable wage struggles and street battles, barricades-all these run together, inextricabily tangled, side by side, crossing one another, overflowing into one another - a perpetually and changing sea of phenomena. And the law of motion is clear; it doesn't lie in the mass strike itself or it's technical peculiarities, but in relation to social and political forces in the revolution itself. The mass strike is merely the form of revolutionary struggle at a given movement, and every shift in the relation of the contending forces, in party development, and class divisions, and in the position of the counter-revolution - all this immediately affects the strike action in a thousand invisible and scarcely countable ways. However, the strike action itself hardly passes for a moment. It changes only its forms, it's extent, its effect. It is the living heart-beat of the revolution and at the same time it's most powerful driving force". (Luxemburg, vide Trolich 1972 : 266-269).

Her reservations about the mass strike-that it cannot be used as a lifeless theoretical scheme - are again interesting. She rejected the idea of its being used as a lever to liberate the movement in any impasse without the prerequisites of elementary actions because it is not the mass strike which necessiates the revolution, but the revolution which points to the necessity of mass strike to intensify the crisis in a revolutionary situation. She wrote :

> "If the mass strike is not an isolated act, but the expression of a whole period of the class struggle, and if this period is identical with the revolutionary phase of that struggle, then it is clear that the mass strike cannot be called at will even if the decision to do so may have come from the highest level of the strongest social democratic party..... A mass strike born out of sheer discipline and enthusiasm would, at best, play the role of a mere episode, a symptom of the fighting mood of the working class, and then the situation would revert to that of quiet every day life". (Frolich, 1972 :136)

Luxemburg's views on mass strike are in line with her inclination to examine everything critically rather than taking it as given. Whereas Bernstein advocated mass strike for specific reforms and Bebel and Kautsky as a defensive tactic, Luxemburg made it her main political strategy. She strongly opposed the subordination of mass strike by the trade unions to the parliamentary party's activity and decrees. In the Jena Congress of the S.P.D. in 1906 she argued that trade unions should be autonomous

and not be subordinated to the party. They should be treated on par with it and a mass strike could be launched without a full agreement between the trade union and the party.

Luxemburg's views on how best the bourgeois parliaments and governments could be utilized have to be examined against this background, the essence of which is that real class consciousness emerges spontaneously and operates in terms of mass strikes as a reaction to the bourgeois system and the consciousness imparted by the party by way of representing the views of the masses in the parliament and also initiating political struggle at the behest of the central committee. For her this consciousness could not be imposed. She and her close follower Clara Zetkin, were against the dominant attitude in the party towards parliamentary actions.

Luxemburg saw clear signs of decline of parliamentarism in Germany because of the collusion between the proletarian class forces and the bourgeoisie, as well as bourgeois world politics. Bourgeois parliaments were tossed about impotently like flotsam in a stormy sea of these national and international disturbances, conflicts and transformations. Parliamentarism was far removed from being the absolute programme of democratic development and

of human progress as was though by Bernstein. Bourgeois parliamentarism would remain alive only so long as the conflict between the bourgeoisie and feudalism continued. Once the general trend towards a compromise between the bourgeoisie and feudalism sets in, as in the dwindling of differences between the Whigs and the Tories in England or Republican's and the clerical monarchist aristocrats in France, the essence of bourgeois parliamentarism dies down. The inter-party struggles of the bourgeoisie had given way to cliquish squabbles which sustituted oratorial parliamentary tactics. She felt that this oratorial parliamentary tactic could be generally useful only for a militant party for exposing the real motives behind the squabbles.

By this she meant that parliamentary elections provided an opportunity for the powerful development of socialist progaganda and for the estimation of socialist strength by the proletariat. She recommended agitational as well as legislative work with pragmatism but felt that the proletarian task could be fulfilled only if social democracy retained an awareness of its role as an oppositional party and at the same time found the golden mean between sectarian negation and bourgeois parliamentarism, always remembering that its real strength lay outside the parliament, in the proletarian masses.

Her views on participation in bourgeois governments are very crucial in terms of the strategy and tactics of revolution. Leaders like Jaures praised the experiments in the participation in bourgeois governments of the type undertaken by Millerand in France and entry of the socialists into the fortress of bourgeois governments. The move, proposed by the reformists through out the Second International, was justified by Jaures in theoretical terms : "the development of capitalism towards socialism had reached a transitional stage in which political rule was being exercised jointly by the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the participation of the socialists in the government was the outward expression of this rule". (Frolich, 1969 : 63).

As against Jaures' argument, that by participating in bourgeois coalition governments the Social Democratic party should occupy every position that came their way, Rosa Luxemburg argued that this could be done provided the positions were such that the class struggle against the bourgeoisie and its state could continue to be waged. Whereas parliament offered social democracy positions from where such struggles could be continued in the interests of the proletariat, the government allowed no room for any real opposition as all the participants had to work on one common programme of the bourgeois state. A really principled

opponent of the existing order, however, was bound to fail in his very first attempt to oppose the government, or else he would have to carry out the daily functions necessary for the continued existence of the state and thereby cease to be a socialist.

A social democrat striving as member of government to obtain social reforms and opposing the bourgeois state as a whole would reduce his socialism to bourgeois democratic or bourgeois working class politics. Frolich quotes Luxemburg, on this point to say : "In bourgeois society social democracy by its very nature is prescribed the role of an opposition party; it may appear as a ruling party only on the ruins of that bourgeois state" (Frolich Ibid, 64).

The experiments of Millerand (1899-33) and the Popular Front (1936) in France and of Mac Donald's government in Great Britain (1924, 1929-31 and 1931-35) have illustratively proved what Luxemburg argued : under the pressure of capitalist power, bourgeois radicalism dictates the character and the extent of the policy of the socialist ministers and therefore socialist policy; socialist ministers would be forced to compromise and not be allowed to influence practical politics. Thus the essential purpose which participation in bourgeois governments served, according to Luxemburg, was : "the simultaneous protection

of the interests of both workers and employers - the former by means of illusary concessions, the latter by means of material ones, (and which) finds its palpable expression in the simultaneous working out measures designed to make the workers happy on paper and to protect capital with the iron reality of bayonets". (Ibid : 19). Thus Luxemburg was quite clear about the futility of attempts of the revolutionaries in trying to use the bourgeois political organs without the conquest of political power by the proletariat.

The effects of the experiments which were marked by minor gains in one respect but major losses, particularly massacre of workers, also illustrated what Luxemburg said about participation in the bourgeois governments. Because of the participation of the socialist party in the government, the working class was bound hand and foot and could not make its power felt. It led to the complete cleavage and crippling of the working class movement and also resulted in turning it away from parliamentarism to ultra-radical syndicalism.

Crowning all that she said about the limitations of parliamentarism and participation in bourgeois governments is her stress on the indispensability of violence, latent or otherwise :

> "violence is and remains the ultima ratio (the last resort), even for the working class the supreme law of the class struggle always present, sometimes in a latent, sometimes in an active form. And when we try to revolutionarise mind by parliamentary and other activity, it is so that, when finally needed, the revolution may move not only the mind but also the hand" (Ibid).

If an opportunist line is taken and the use of violence is renounced altogether making the masses to follow the path of bourgeois radicalism or bourgeois legality the whole parliamentary activity and other political struggle will go to naught, giving way to reactionary or fascist violence on the part of the ruling classes.

However, against the charge of bloodshed, terrorism and political murder on the part of the communist party of Germany she replied :

> "In bourgeois revolutions bloodshed, terrorism, and political murder have always been indispensable weapons in the hands of the rising classes. However, the proletarian revolution needs no terrorism to attain its ends; it hates and abhors murder. It needs none of these weapons because it is fighting against institutions, not against individuals. Because it doesn't enter the arena with naive illusions, it needs no bloody terror to avenge any disappointment it might suffer. The proletarian revolution is not the desparate attempt of a minority to shape the world by violence according to its own ideals; it is the action of the great millions of people called upon to fulfil a historic mission and to transform historical necessity into historical reality". (Ibid : 134-135).

It appears that Luxemburg had emotional and mass appeal in her conception of aims and methods of proletarian revolution which "come from the heart". However, in this regard, she on the whole was free from both the self-abnegation theories of Tolstoy and Gandhi and the unrealistic and unfruitful use of violence that would lead to destructive effects. What could be said with least exaggeration is that her experiences in all their originality would be relevant to the problems of revolution in any country at present, provided the risk of a mechanical application is avoided. Her experiences also point to the fallacies of the programmes of some parties that adopt Marxist - Leninist theory and practice in a dogmatic way.

Her original and creative formulations and critical analysis of the political praxis of reformists and revolutionary Marxist like Lenin notwithstanding, Luxemburg had some limitations, both theoretical and practical.

While Luxemburg was right in being critical of Lenin's idea of introducing socialism from without, she overestimated the efficacy of the element of spontaneity in revolutionising the working class. This limitation manifested itself in her venture to initiate an uprising led by the "Spartacus League" as also her underestimation

of the influence of Social Democracy which hampered any mass action. Tracing the theoretical roots of her errors, Molyneux writes :

> "It was not that she overestimated the heights to which workers could spontaneously rise but that she overestimated the evenness with which this process would occur. Clearly she recognised that some workers are more capable and courageous than others and that some have a high level of socialist consciousness than others. What she did not fully comprehend was that between the revolutionary worker, who wishes to overthrow capitalism and the less advanced worker who wishes to overthrow capitalism and the less advanced worker who wishes to improve his conditions within capitalism there exists a certain contradiction (Albeit not an insoluable one); and that on the basis of this contradiction there arise parties claiming to be parties of the working class, but which actually operate as bourgeois agents within the labour movement". (Molyneux, 1978 : 113-114).

Molyneux traces her failure to see the necessity of organising the advanced revolutionary workers separately so as to increase their hold on the working class as a whole to fight opportunism and reformism from within and from without to this theoretical error. Molyneux puts Luxemburg close to Marx rather than to Lenin both in strengths and weaknesses. Like Marx she opposed sectarianism and emphasised mass action and also shared with him certain weaknesses like "an overoptimistic and foreshortened view of the process by which the class-in-itself transforms itself into a class-for-itself-the assumption that the objective economic unity of the working

class would spontaneously lead to its ultimate political unity" (Ibid : 115-116). As a result, Luxemburg also shared with Marx certain elements of fatalism and also a tendency to underestimate the potentialities of reformism in fetishising the working class and blunting their consciousness which were discussed in the beginning of this paper.

In the ultimate analysis, I agree with Molyneux when he puts Luxemburg among the revolutionary Marxists. That is, whereas Lenin was able to correct his early formulations, responding to the criticisms of other leaders like Luxemburg and through the experience of 1905 and made advances over Marx in terms of revolutionary strategy and tactics, Luxemburg did not live to assimilate and reflect on the experience of the German revolution so as modify her formulations. Luxemburg's theory of the party and propositions about forms and methods of struggle remain useful as weapons particularly in the context of labour movement then and now which has suffered bureacratic domination by social democracy and Stalinism. But Luxemburg-ism is valid when it is integrated into the Leninist framework rather than when treated as an alternative to Leninism.

Conclusion

The main concern of this Chapter has been a close consideration or the practical problems in terms of formulating strategies and tactics and evolving forms of struggle suitable to the specific historical contexts and exploring the possibilities of both spontaneous struggles of the masses and those initiated by the organised parties both in the established representative institutions and around various issues in the civil society. The discussion started with the differences of Marx and Engels with the Anarchist school of thought who rejected any need for political action against the state and its institutions. However, the main thrust has been on the major trend in the international communist movement i.e. Marxist reformism or revisionism of the German Social-Democrats, particularly Bernstein and Kautsky.

The problems which the reformist social democrats landed themselves in have been discussed at length. The Social Democratic parties were the only parties which achieved an extensive record of reforms in favour of workers but faced three main dilemmas : (1) whether to seek the advancement of socialism through political institutions of the capitalist society or to confront the bourgeoisie directly; (2) Whether to seek the agents of

socialist transformation exclusively in the working class or to rely on multiclass or supra-class support; and (3) whether to dedicate all efforts and energies to its complete transformation.

I have argued that the propositions and choices of Bernstein were quite inadequate owing to his revisionist understanding of Marxism and the contemporary problems. On the other hand Kautsky did not deviate much from the principle of class struggle and the recognition of contradictions of capitalist society, but he failed to recognise the necessity of the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat i.e. a revolutionary transformation of society by non-violent and violent means. Both Bernstein and Kautsky united at the end of their political career and placed exclusive emphasis on parliamentary and electoral means. This, among other reasons, resulted in the failure of revolution in the advanced capitalist countries which were expected to undergo a revolution.

The examination of reformist social democracy was followed by a discussion of the basic arguments of Lenin, the originator of Bolshevism and the architect of the Russian revolution, especially his criticism of reformism and revisionism and the opportunism of the reformist

parties of the Second International. It has been pointed out that the main thrust of his argument has been the recognition of increasing contradictions in capitalist systems : imperialism, prompted by finance capital, the principle of class struggle and a renewed emphasis on the dictatorship of the proletariat. His arguments, replies and cautions in regard to revolutionary tactics and forms of struggle have been advanced in line with the above basic factors. Particularly worthmentioning are his rich and imaginative arguments regarding the utilisation of various bodies and organisations, progressive and reactionary, for waging various forms of struggle in addition to adapting revolutionary tactics and compromises in regard to the utilisation of parliamentary institutions and bourgeois governments. He preferred the widest possible scope, rather than a narrow perspective, of any form of struggle and this sounds very relevant to the complex historical situations in the Third World Countries.

Towards the end I presented the views of Rosa Luxemburg, the most radical of all those who challenged the reformist and revisionist trends led by Bernstein and Kautsky. In addition to her critical understanding of Marxist propositions, and their defence against the onslaught of revisionism, she proposed and also proved with practical evidence some alternatives to, what she

called the conservative ideas of Lenin regarding organisation of party and the relations between the masses and the party. Her alternative propositions regarding the tactics of revolution and political and revolutionary utilisation of parliaments like the theory of spontaneity, mass political strike and work among the trade unions are considered to be useful for any revolutionary practice with suitable adaptation, provided they are integrated into the Leninist framework rather than taken as an alternative.

Footnotes

1. Lenin writes further, "Marxism teaches the proletariat not to keep aloof from the bourgeois revolution, not to be indifferent to it, not to allow the leadership of the revolution to be assumed by the bourgeoisie but, on the contrary, to take most energetic part in it, to fight most resolutely for consistent proletarian democratism, for the revolution to be carried to its conclusion. We cannot get out of bourgeois democratic boundaries of the revolution, but we can vastly extend these boundaries, and within those boundaries we can and must fight for the interests of the proletariat, for its immediate needs and conditions that will make it possible to prepare its forces for the future complete victory (Lenin, 1977 : 46).

2. In 1905 tsar's government laid down the law on the inauguration of the Duma and procedure for elections. The Duma, called Bulygin Duma named after A. G. Bulygin, minister for interior, had no legislative power and was only a consultative body. The Bolsheviks gave a boycott call to the workers and peasants and concentrated all agitation on slogans of an armed uprising, a revolutionary army and provisional revolutionary government. The boycott call effectively mobilized all the revolutionary forces, organised mass political strikes and prepared for an armed uprising. The Elections to the Bulygin Duma were not held and it was swept away by the mounting revolution and the all Russia

political strike. This general political strike of 1905 involved over two million people, the motive force was overthrowing the autocracy, convocation of a constitutent assembly and the establishment of a democratic republic. The all-Russia political strike demonstrated the power of the working class movement and gave an impetus to the development of the revolutionary struggle among the peasants and in the army and navy.

CHAPTER - IV

THE STATE, POLITICS AND CLASS STRUGGLE IN SOUTH ASIA AND INDIA

The two prominent theories of development and backwardness identified by now are : the traditional dominant behaviouralist school which may also be called the diffusionist school and the Marxist school. In the prolegamana of the book State and Politics in the Third World (1979 : 12) Goulbourne, briefly, juxtaposes the two schools. The behaviouralists/diffusionists, according to Goulbourne, see development in terms of socio-economic and political changes involving a transition from traditional to modern societies. In between the two extremes of growth or apart from modernisation or development there also occur breakdowns and decay. Further, there is also the possibility of mixed socio-economic systems, or what Riggs (1964) called prismatic societies, exhibiting both traditionality and modernity. Goulbourne quite rightly points to the tautology in the main argument of this school : that backward areas have remained backward because they failed to move towards modernity, and traditions are sources of backwardness and

obstacles to change. According to Goulbourne the Marxist influenced under-development school represented by A. G. Frank in Latin American and Samir Amin in Africa very rightly started its critique of the behaviouralist school of development from these very assumptions regarding tradition and modernity i.e. an absence of contact between the traditional and the modern societies. According to them, underdevelopment far from being a result of absence of contact between modern developed socieites and the under-developed ones is, in fact, a product of the presence of such contact between the two kinds of scoeities - the developed capitalist centres and the under-developed pre - or proto-capitalist structures, which they call peripheries or satellites. Here the notion of movement from the traditional to the modern runs counter to the essential question of development because the Marxist under-development school sees patterns of under-development or "development of under-development" rather than stages of development. The perceived relation between the societies at the centre and periphery are that of domination by the former of the latter; a relation of exploiter and exploited through the mechanisms of unequal exchange in trading of primary and manufactured goods. Development within the existing structure of relations for this school has no meaning because the underdeveloped countries cannot become

developed within the capitalist system. Thus socialism is the only way out. Goubourne has been critical of this school primarily because, "the ideological postures adopted by underdevelopment theories that the backward areas cannot hope to become developed, is itself confining and limiting on attempts to explain changes that have occurred in these areas over the last two decades or so, or much longer in the case of Latin America". What Goulbourne suggests is that a Marxist analysis of the political must start in fact, and not merely as a slogan, from the contradictions inherent in capitalist production that provide the conditions for the specificity and forms of the capitalist state. In the case of backward capitalist formations the tendency to reduce the political to a mere mechanical response to economic developments which often happens due to the obvious and unconcealed connection between economy and the state, should be avoided. As Goulbourne points out :

> "In a general sense then, development is best approached in terms of posing questions regarding the degree of establishment of the capitalist mode of production, or attempts to transform modes of production, paying attention not only to the productive forces but more importantly to the relations of production.... With regard to political development or political change this is important, particularly since under development theory hardly concerned itself with the specificity of the political while orthodox development theory presented a much more thoughful but overpoliticised view of the political. However, it still remains for contemporary Marxism to develop a general theory of the capitalist state capable of explaining both developed as well as backward capitalist states". (Goulbourne 1979 : 14)

The Problem of Specifying the Political in Marxism

Because of the general crisis of capitalism, the role of the state in guaranteeing accumulation and thereby strengthening the conditions of its own existence has increased. This requires a study of the specificities of various situations in which the states come to resume capital and the various forms it develops corresponding to the changes at the economic level in conjunction with its internal autonomy. A Marxist analysis of the political should start from the contradiction's within capitalist production that provide for the specificity and forms of the capitalist state. It will not suffice to confine one's analysis to the appearance of the state as is done by the dogmatic Marxists who reduce the political to a mere mechanical response to economic developments.

One of the reasons why even the radical critique of orthodox development theories as put forward by the underdevelopment school is deficient in one sense is that it evolved the critique purely on an economic terrain. The economic level was so conceived that the political was perceived as an automatic and therefore unproblematic factor of the economic conditions of underdevelopment. They felt no need to hypothesise about the connection between

the political and the economic levels of backward capitalist formations.

> "The stress was almost entirely on the economy and very little on the political which invariably both reflected and perpetuated a type of economic reductionism. Another reason undermining the political is that the radical critique of development theory rests largely upon a moral injunction of capitalism that capitalism failed to develop backward areas thus putting forward a humanistic political creed in juxtaposition with apparently orthodox political development thesis. Thus the underdevelopment theory failed to build an adequate theoretical structure in which the analysis of the political in backward or undeveloped formations remained a problem". (Groulbourne).

It will be relevant here to bring in the contemporary debate on the specification of the political and the relative autonomy of the state. It is not that in the Marxian theory of state specification of the political has not been done. Marx and Engels took care to explicate that the relation between the political and the economic, between political power and social classes or, subservience of state to a particular class depend upon the nature of the development of classes or class configuration which in turn are the result of a particular social formation. However, these questions in Marxist works remained controversial and analysis of practical questions of state, politics and class struggle became inadequate.

In recent years, Nicos Poulantzas, Ralph Miliband, Claus Offe and Jurgen Habermas have filled this gap. In regard to the specification of the political the most notable figure among them is Nicos Poulantzas. In his recent work, Marxism and Politics (1976), Miliband has also worked out a good and enlightening debate on participation of communist parties in bourgeois parliaments, assemblies and other representative associations at the local level with special reference to reformatory and insurrectionary politics. These ideas may serve as a guide for analysing the political practice of present day communist parties both in the capitalist and developing Third World Countries. Of particular importance is the politics of Eurocomunism dealt with by Miliband in "Constitutionalism and R$_e$volution" which appeared in a compilation of his works Class Power or State Power : Political Essays (1983).

Goulbourne mentions Nicos Poulantzas as providing useful tools of analysis in this regard because Poulantzas attempted to construct a theory of politics and state as a distinct region of social formation while stressing both its relative autonomy from, as well as its essential links with, the economic. For Poulantzas the political in Marxism, is constituted by the juridico-political structure

of the state and politics involves the political practice of the classes or the class struggle. The political occupies a specific place within a social formation and involves specific social practicess which arise from the structure of social formation. In other words the political is situated at the point where the contradictions of a social formation are condensed. Political practice denotes that practice which involves the 'transformation of a definite object which results in the production of something new'. This involves an understanding of the present moment which is in fact the specific object of politics and constitutes the juncture where contradictions are reflected in a glaring form and where also transformation takes place. The political either transforms or maintains the existing structures. Poulantzas stressed the need to specify the relation between the social formation and political practice by clarifying that institutionalised power of the state is the objective of political practice. (Goulbourne, 1979 : 93).

Goulbourne summarises the views of Poulantzas on the state and the role it performs as follows :

1. "by providing order within the social formation and thereby becoming the organisational principle of the formation, (the state) provides the formation with its necessary coherence factor; the state therefore maintains the unity of the social formation.

2. "Since the state provides the very structures within which the social contradictions are condensed the state is therefore the place where class domination must be deciphered and it is therefore here that transformation of structures takes place" (Groulbourne 1979 : 23). The work of Poulantzas has been criticised on many counts. For some his formulation has overstressed the function of the political within a social formation while others are critical of Poulantzas for his use of Althusser's notion of the ideological state apparatus (as distinct from the repressive ones leading to what his critics refer to as the "overpoliticisation of the political".

Another criticism, from which incidentally Goulbourne defends Poulantzas, is that he has reproduced radical bourgeois social science or radical-structural functionalism. Both structural-functionalism and Poulantzas give formal status to the state. However, as Goulbourne points out, the similarity ends there for "whereas for Poulantzas transformation or maintenance of structures which are carried out at the level of the state find their source in the class struggle, for Almond et. al. (the structural-functionalists) the notion of class struggle, which rests on antagonism between capital and labour in capitalist society is not even implied" (Ibid : 24-25).

Other points of criticism are that Poulantzas directly or indirectly indicated that his formulation is applicable not only to the capitalist mode but also to

others like the pre-capitalist ones. In this regard it is pointed out, that it comes closer to functionalists or the Hegelian notion of the universal ideal unfolding itself in human history. Furthermore, there is ambiquity in Poulantzas' formulation regarding the relation between the state and social formation because sometimes the state is presented as reflecting the unity of the social formation and at other time it only appears to constitute this unity.

Recently Therborn has also raised a question regarding the concept of relative autonomy in Nicos Poulantzas. He writes that although Nicos Poulantzas has produced a number of complex, and in many ways path-breaking, studies of classes and the capitalist state nowhere has he directly investigated the forms of state organisation. In Political Power and Social Classes, he stressed the relative autonomy of the state from the economy as a distinctive characteristic of the capitalist state. Only with extreme brevity does he refer to its system of organisation - namely bureaucratism which reflects the political impact of bourgeois ideology on the state. He focusses more on the bureaucracy as a specific social category than on bureaucracy as a bourgeois form of state organization. Moreover Therborn is critical of Miliband for having the same tendency of bypassing the problem of state organisation.

For example, in an approach reminiscent of Poulantzas' view of bureaucratism, Miliband seeks to define the class character of the state primarily by reference to the bourgeois ideological orientation of its personnel. In his recent work also Miliband (1977) stressed the central role relative autonomy plays in the social formation. (Therborn 1978 : 26-27).

In spite of all these deficiencies Poulantzas' work is of pioneering importance because he has, within the Marxist framework, reasserted the crucial importance of the object of Marxist political analysis.

State, Politics and Class Struggle

Theorisation of Marxist political practice and experience in advanced capitalist countries as well as in Third World countries has been very scanty and there is no Marxist tradition of political analysis applicable to the study of politics in both, the situations. The few works that we have on advanced capitalist countries have left many problems unresolved.[1] The problems of revolution in the Third World countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America, where there is a vast potentiality for revolution are increasing day by day. No substantial work like Trotsky's The Revolution Betrayed has been

written since then. The whole area has been left to antiMarxists to explore. However, as Miliband points out :

> "But the poisition in many ways is rather better in regard to the many different countries which are arbitrarily subsumed under the label Third World. But here too it would appear to the non-specialist that as far as political analysis is concerned no more than some paths have been cleared, and that the main work of theorising the known practice remains to be undertaken; and it is only in the understanding of it that it will be possible to discover which theoretical categories of Marxism are relevant to the experience in question, which need to be modified and which should be discarded" (Miliband, 1977 : 15).

Theorisation of the state and its institutions, classes and class conflict in the Third World or ex-colonial countries on Marxist lines has become more difficult than theorisation on these aspects in capitalist countries, because the development of capitalism in Third World countries is blunted in various ways that elude any Marxist analysis.

I briefly present below the contemporary theories of state and classes especially in the Third World. That should facilitate the formation of a clear view regarding the state, class formation and class struggle in India. India can be considered a leading figure in the Third World group of countries in the sense that

politico-economic changes in India invariably reflect not only on other Third World Countries but also on advanced capitalist countries.

In the writings of Marx and Engels two distinct views of state are discernible : one, the state conceived as an instrument of a single dominant class and the other a relatively autonomus view of the state. However, even in the second view, the position of the State although Superior to the contending social classes, is such that it cannot but remain the protector of an economically and socially dominant classes while being autonomous from them to the extent that it serves the interests of other classes as well.

In his recent work on class relations in Third World countries Miliband observes that classes involved in class conflicts in the Third World countries "are in some major ways different or of different importance from those in advanced capitalist societies". This is mainly because the class conflicts encountered in these countries assume forms other than those found in inadvanced capitalist socieites. The economic development and social formation in these countries have been distorted by their long-drawn subjection to the colinial powers (Miliband, 1977). This by implication means that Marxism has to be adopted to

the very different circumstances involving different economic, social and political structures subsumed under the category of underdeveloped countries or what are generally called Third World countries. Two of these important circumstances are :

(1) In a majority of these countries there has not emerged a strong indigenous class of large-scale capitalists, as the major industrial, extractive, financial and commercial enterprises are more often than not owned or controlled by foreign interests. The indegenous capitalist class is more or less rooted in the small-scale enterprises, where also dependence on foreign interest is pronounced. As a result "the working class is relatively small, compared with the population of the countryside, and concentrated on the one hand in a number of large enterprises and dispersed on the other in a multitude of small ones".

(2) The mass of workers being peasants the main relations of production in these countries tend to be between landlord and peasant in a multitude of different patterns and connections. The class conflict in these economies occurs on a different basis and assumes a very different form from those encountered in advanced capitalist countries (Miliband 1977 : 29-30).

Miliband notes that this specificity does not mean that Marxist guidelines are not applicable to the analysis of class relations and class conflicts in these contexts. At the same time it is necessary to avoid the tendency to simply and mechanically transpose analysis of situations in advanced capitalist countries to these countries whose capitalism is of a distinct nature.

Discussing the most obvious features of the state and political institutions in the Third World, Miliband notes the inflation of the executive power and a very high degree of its autonomy from the civil society over which the state holds sway. (Miliband, 1977 : 106-11). Although this is also the case with the Communist countries. The reasons for this inflation are different in the case of the Third World countries. An important reason in the case of Third World countries is that the social classes are interested in limiting and controlling the state power but do not have the power or will to do so. On the other hand the dominant classes in some countries find it to their advantage to have a strong and repressive state to safeguard their interests. Miliband offers the clarification, which is important for Marxist analysis, that the Third World countries can be categorised into two groups:

countries where economically dominant classes, well entrenched and developed, do exist; and those where they do not exist. While the first category refers to Latin American countries, (except Cuba) and those in South Asia, the second category refers to the countries in Africa except South Africa.

Except a semblance of similarity and commonality of foreign capitalist interests constituting an important element in the socio economic structures of these two categories of countries, there are large differences among them. In the first category of countries, where there is more than one dominant class, Marxist analysis as applicable to advanced capitalist countries, can be used with some adaptations and changes. Miliband feels that the differences - social and economic structure, degree of underdevelopment and dependence producing class relations and class antagonism of a different nature, and the manner in which the state in each situation responds to these - among them are not beyond the reach of Marxist analysis.

In regard to the analysis of the situations in countries of the second group where no dominant class existed during the colonial period, the directions laid by Miliband are very useful. Miliband says that in the absence of an economically dominant class in these societies and where only local and foreign interests are scattered the state represents itself in "the sense that those people who occupy the leading positions in the state

system will use their power, inter alia, to advance their own economic interests, and the economic interests of their families, friends and followers or clients. A process of enrichment occurs, which assumes a great number of forms and leads to a proliferation of diverse economic ventures and activities. In this process a genuine local bourgeoisie may come into being and grow strong, with continuing close connections with the state and its leading members, who are themselves part of that new bourgeoisie". In Miliband's opinion the relation between economic and political power in such cases has been inverted : it is not the possession of economic power which results in yielding political power and influence but it is the possession of political power (administrative and military power) that results in possibilities of economic enrichment which might lead to the emergence of a dominant economic class. Here the state is a source of economic power as well as an instrument of it or in Miliband's words :

> "State power is a major means of production. The dominant group is divided and fragmented and on the other hand power is highly personalised thus resulting in a maximum autonomy of the state which is more a bureaucratic shell with political activity monopolised" (Miliband 1977 : 108-109).

While agreeing with Miliband in a broad sense, I think an analysis of the specifics of the Indian situation using the categories which Miliband used will be appropriate.

A fairly good attempt at examining the Third World countries in terms of old and new imperialism and revolutionary potentiality has been made by Kathleen Gough et. al. (1973). Of particular importance are the contributions of Kathleen Gough and Hamza Alavi.

For Alavi the military and the bureaucratic structure created by the colonial relationship and its further ramifications in the post-colonial period have rendered the relationship between the state and the social classes very complex. They cannot be treated as the simple instrument of a single ruling class. In Western societies the nation state was created by an indigenous bourgeoisie in the wake of their ascendent power and with it a framework of laws and institutions that were found necessary for the development of capitalist relations of production also came into existence. Because of the incomplete bourgeois revolution in the colonies, the establishment of a bourgeois state and institutional framework there was superimposed by the metropolitan bourgeoisie. It simply replicated the super-structure of the state which was established in the metropolitan country, so that through that it could exercise domination on all the indigenous social classes in the colonies. As Hamza Alavi puts it :

> "the super-structure in the colony is therefore overdeveloped in relation to the structure in the colony, for its basis lies in the metropolitan structure itself, from which it is later separated at the time of independence. The colonial state is therefore equipped with a powerful bureaucratic military apparatus and mechanisms of government which enable it through its routine operations to subordinate the native social classes. The post colonial society inherits that overdeveloped state apparatus and its institutionalised practices through which the operations of the indigenous social classes are regulated and controlled. At the time of independence, the indigenous bourgeoisie find themselves enmeshed in bureaucratic controls by which those at the top of the hierarchy of the bureaucratic-military apparatus of the state are able to maintain and even extend their dominant power in the society, having been freed from direct metropolitan control. (Alavi, 1973 : 147).

The main problem as conceived by Alavi is that the foreign imperialist bourgeoisies which established the post-colonial societies, now joined by the neo-colonialist bourgeoisie is very much present in these societies. Although the relationship of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie and the post-colonial states has changed, the state is neither subordinate to the indegenous bourgeoisie because of the influence of the neo-colonial bourgeoisie on it, nor is it an instrument of any particular bourgeoisie; it is a situation where the interests of both neo-colonial bourgeoisie and the indigenous bourgeoisie compete. It is imperative that the state in such a situation is relatively autonomous, mediating between the competing interests of the main properties classes; the metropolitan bourgeoisie,

the indigenous or the industrial bourgeoisie and the landed classes, while at the same time preserving the social order.

Alavi elaborates further that unlike the classical bourgeois state, the military-bureaucratic state in most of the Third World countries assumes a relatively autonomous economic role in the name of promoting economic growth both by appropriating surplus from the bureaucratically directed economic activity at home and aborad and more importantly by utilizing its autonomous position it borrows heavily and invites foreign investment at its discretion.

The relationship is fundamentally different wherever democratic forms of government and norms exist. In such situations, particularly while in power as also out of power, politicians and political parties participate with the bureaucracy by mediating between the community from whom they seek political support and those who make public policy, i.e. the bureaucracy, by manipulating public relations for making them acceptable to the community at large.

Referring to the situation in countries like Indian where political parties and other democratic forms representing various sections of society have been functioning since the movement for liberation acquired serious proportions, Alavi points out that whatever

democracy that was introduced in instalments did not restrict the powers of bureaucratic military-structure and the personnel in this set up already learnt to bypass the politicians and the practice got institutionalised in the process. After independence the situation has been consolidated and extended.

Roots of the Mediating Role of the State

Alavi emphasises the mediating role of the state in relation to the three main competing propertied classes : the metropolitan, the native, and the feudal land-owning class. Classical Marxist theory envisages a fusion between the metropolitan bourgeoisie, the native comprador bourgeoisie which complements the role of the metropolitan bourgeoisie and the feudal type of land-owning class. In this scheme the rising national bourgeoisie which wants to assert independence is seen to be opposed to the bourgeoisie intersts. This class is also supposed to play a leading role in the national liberation struggle with strong antifeudal postures in addition to being anti-imperial to accomplish the national bourgeois democratic revolution. But Alavi points out, quoting Paul Baran in his support that this is not what happened in the post-colonial societies. Its capitalist bourgeois component, confronted at an early stage with the spectre of social revolution, turns swiftly

and resolutely against its fellow travellers of yesterday and its moral enemy of tomorrow (i.e. the industrial proletariat and the peasantry). In fact it does not hesitate to make common cause with the feudal elements representing the main abstacle to its own development, with the imperialist rulers just dislodged by the national liberation, and with comprador groups threatened by the political retreat of their former principals (Alavi, 1973 : 57).

Moreover, Baran suggests that the threat of revolution in the post-colonial societies makes the three main propertied classes unite so as to maintain the social order in their interest. The accommodation between the native bourgeoisie and the feudal land-owning classes in the post-independence socio-economic structure is now possible because after the task of winning national independence the super-structure of a nation state necessary for bourgeois land-owning class was already established by the metropolitan bourgeoisie - a task which confronted the rising bourgeoisie in the European countries. Moreover, the feudal landowning class buttresses the political purposes of the native bourgeoisie as its agent in the countryside at all levels thus resisting any revolutionary upsurge from the grassroot level (Alavi 1973 : 56-58).

An analysis similar to that of Alavi has been presented recently by Anupam Sen. Sen's analysis of State focusses on two important things to be noted in regard to any formulation of the relationship between the state, the social economy and the social classes. "First, the State (i.e. its functionaries) always endeavour to acquire as much independence as possible. The source of this striving is the relative independence with which the state is first endowed at its inception. But this relative independence or autonomy may result in more independence or autonomy from society or the social classes, depending on the development of the latter and mode or modes of production, in short, depending on the conjuncture of the social formations." (Sen, 1982 : 4).

Basing himself on the writings of Marx and Engels Sen shows how the state attains a position superior to and independent of the control of the social classes. This happens particularly when contending classes balance one another's power in a particular social formation or when the contending social classes are weak as a result of the development of a particular mode of production or in the event of a military conquest.

Secondly, once the power of the state becomes superior, the state functionaries tend to pursue such

economic policies as are not in consanance with the derived economic movement which results in the evolution of a different mode of production.

Sen refers to two examples to illustrate this tendency of state power to control the economy whether to facilitate or to obstruct it's natural development. In England the Tory Party representing the aristocrats was under compulsion to mould its policies in the interests of the bourgeoisie because it could not go against the tide of rapid capitalist growth for fear of losing its very existance.

The second example is that of India, where merchant capitalists endeavoured, in the seventeenth and eitheenth centuries, to transform urban artisan industries in service of the court into manufacturing industries which could cater to the needs of the world market. At the same time the central power of the state was weakened. Even then the weakened state power in India functioned as a fetter on the rapid development of the capitalist class and to a great extent resisted such growth. Instead, if the state had played a catalytic role it would have undermined the Asiatic mode of production in the context of the rising demand for Indian goods. This failure of the state resulted not only in retarding the development of the capitalist mode of production but also in its own

disintegration and defeat at the hands of the colonial powers. Thus Sen shows that the state can both facilitate economic movement or the development of a mode of production as in England or obstruct it as in India (Ibid : 3-5). However, the ability of the state to obstruct or promote the development of a mode of production depends largely on the strength of both the preexisting mode being superseded and of the classes that come into being with the new mode.

Sen thus argues the state in India was autonomous and still is autonomous. This autonomous character has had positive impact on the character of economic development in India, during the pre British, British and post-independence periods. The author then presents three theses. First, the autonomy of the state which resulted from the Asiatic mode of production obstructed India's transition to capitalism and thus undermined her economic development and led to her colonisation. Second, the continuation of the state's autonomy vis-a-vis the indigenous social classes during the colonial period due to a social formation which was partly Asiatic, partly feudal and partly capitalistic. The colonial state's subservience to the metropolitan bourgeoisie enabled it to transfer colossal resources from India to the metropolitan centres leading to India's underdevelopment and low productivity of labour. Third, ".....the attempt by the post independent state in

India to maintain its autonomy, which is derived more or less from the same social formation inherited from the colonial period, has resulted in extensive state control of the private corporate sector, the support and encouragement of the artisan petty industries as a counter force to the private corporate industries, and the failure of the bourgeoisie to transform agriculture into a capitalist undertaking. These measures, in turn, have led to a lopsided development of the economy in which the condition of the masses and the direct producers has gradually deteriorated and uncertain future threatens" (Sen, 1982 : 6-7).

Sen appreciates the conclusion of Alavi in regard to the state and classes in Pakistan, Bangladesh and India that in these countries, the bourgeoisie is weak and the state is autonomous vis-a-vis the other classes. However, although he accepts Alavi's assertion that the classes in most Third World countries are underdeveloped, he does not accept the formulation that the state apparatus was overdeveloped in these countries during the colonial period. Sen cites the example of Latin American countries, Nepal, Thailand, Afghanistan and Iran to show that in these countries the state apparatus was not overdeveloped in relation to the social classes.

Sen accepts Alavi's contention that the State in post-colonial Third World countries has failed to establish hegemony. But the failure is not because the state apparatus was overdeveloped by the colonial rulers, as Alavi argues, but because the state was stronger than the social classes, long before these societies were colonised. The state in pre-colonial societies was patriarchal but superior to the indigenous social classes. Colonial powers in India and Pakistan inherited the state apparatus from the patriarchal Mughal State. Alavi fails to analyse historically the social formations of the Indian sub-continent still bearing the pre-colonial roots and their relation to the State. Further, Sen argues that Alavi's contention "that the presence of the metropolitan bourgeoisie in post-colonial societies has balanced and neutralised the power of the two dominant indigenous classes viz. the landlords and the capitalists, thus enabling the state to retain its independence, though ingenious, is not supported by facts" (Ibid 12-13).

CHAPTER - V

PERSPECTIVES OF REVOLUTION AND CLASS STRUGGLE IN INDIA : CPI AND CPI(M)

A critical problem in ascertaining the revolutionary potential and objective conditions conducive for revolution is the nature of class struggle and how the various agencies, particularly the political parties, are intensifying or blunting these struggles. The perception and understanding of class contradiction and its impact on class struggles, however, is a rather difficult issue in the sense that strategies tactics and forms of struggle adopted for these purposes are themselves controversial. This controversy emanates particuarly from the differences in the political practices of agencies and parties which are intensifying class struggle on the one hand and those which are blunting them on the other. At the root of this controversy is of course the assessment of the existence of objective conditions.

Among the communist parties in India there are different perspectives on the nature of classes and class contradictions and corresponding differences in their

programmes. From the time of independence till the late sixties these differences sharpened and manifested themselves subsequently in the emergence of two parties-CPI and CPI(M)-adhering to the parliamentary path on the one hand, and a number of extremist and radical revolutionary groups loosely termed Naxalites, which challenged the traditional ones.

After independence the Communist Party of India deliberately played down the importance of revolutionary radicalism which it had upheld from the beginning till 1950. The party appeared to have developed some stakes in the newly fromed constitution and also aimed at capturing state power through electoral means. It is not that electoralism was not a part of the strategy and tactics of the parties during the thirties and forties, but the nature of elections and parliament had different implications during the British period. However, the Communist Party did stress more on struggles and debated with enthusiasm on armed revolution till nineteen fifty. In all the twists and shifts in its strategies and tactics, both in regard to national and international policies, the party was guided by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). As a result it suffered from inhibitions in taking radical initiatives. This had serious implications particularly during the period from 1939 till late 1940s when a revolutionary initiative on the

part of the Communist Party, without guidance from external powers, was imperative.

After independence, however, the dominant line in the Communist Party of India was in favour of participation in elections and achieving revolution through peaceful and parliamentary means. This happened notwithstanding the Maoist-oriented opposition within the party which started building up from the inception of the armed struggle of the peasantry in Telangana area of Hyderabad State and which was subsequently suppressed. In the subsequent years electoral gains by the Communists in various state assembly and the parliament elections led them towards parliamentary and peaceful methods. However, the ouster of the first elected communist ministry from power in Kerala in 1959 was a serious setback to the supporters of the parliamentary path, although the dominant line in the Communist Party continued to express faith in parliamentary and constitutional methods as a possible means of achieving revolution. Thus the main thrust of the strategy from the first general election onwards was strengthening the communist movement and radicalisation of the masses through parliamentary methods. The CPI considered the formation of a Government in Kerala as the height of democratic struggle. It was made the basis of the compaign for democratic advance in many other states. The

party criticised the Congress for its bureaucratic approach to bringing in socialism and asserted that only mass struggles of the people for democratic improvement can bring in real socialism.

> "They (Congress) say that socialism can be achieved without a mass movement leading to the attainment of power by the working people. The masses are told that the struggle for improvement of their living standards and democratic rights are antinational and disruptive of national economy. They are told that the reforms necessary for democratic rights are antinational and disruptive of national economy. They are told that the reforms necessary for national advance can be achieved gradually by governmental action alone aided by such campaigns as gramdan. They are told that Marxism is outmoded and class struggle alien to Indian traditions CPI (1958 : 18).

The split in the CPI in 1964 was due more to internal ideological differences than to the impact of the Sino-Soviet rift. The Sino-Indian war of 1962 provided the immediate occasion for the split. However, even these differences do not involve issues like working within the bourgeois framework and utilising bourgeois parliaments and assemblies for the revolutionary cause. The differences between the two Communist Parties are in regard to the characteristics of the State and classes which took a political form in the attitude of the parties towards the Congress party. To some extent it resulted in differences in the kind of United Fonts to be formed as also which particular party was to be relied on for a revolutionary advancement of the communit movement. A brief discussion of the programmes of the parties

with reference to characterisation of state and classes in India, attitude to bourgeois representative institutions and forms of struggle should make these issues clear.

Characterisation of the State, Classes and Class Contradiction

The Communist party of India (CPI) considers the Indian state as the organ of the class rule of the national bourgeoisie as a whole in which the big bourgeoisie possesses dominant power. It has strong links with landlords in the countryside and as a result the state power acquires a reactionary character (CPI, 1968 : 31). The national bourgeoisie which is politically independent includes the big and small bourgeoisie and monopoly bourgeoisie which collaborates with foreign capital. While feudal elements still exist as remnants they are not as dominant as the big bourgeoisie. At the same time the big bourgeoisie is powerful but not the leading element. Except the reactionary character of the state which stems from the presence of the landlord classes and the monopoly bourgeoisie, the over all social formation in India is progressive. The programme of the CPI unequivocally speaks of the ushering in of the independent state as an historic advance over the imperialist-bureaucratic rule of the colonial period in spite of the retention of the bourgeoisie class character of the state.

Within the national bourgeoisie the monopoly groups get differentiated from the rest of the bourgeoisie leading to a struggle among the various sections of bourgeoisie to influence the policies of the State. The external contradiction is between the foreign monopoly interests and the masses, while the internal contradiction is between the monopoly and feudal interests on the one hand and exploited masses on the other.

The monopoly and feudal interests pressurise the government to allow the entry of foreign capital and curtail the public sector and also to shift its policies to the right. They oppose democracy, support restrictions on parliamentary democracy and want the promotion of bureaucratic authoritarianism.

The main focus of the struggle of the democratic and socialist forces is to wage extra-parliamentary struggles to influence and change the state structure and the course of parliamentary policies against the interests of the monopolists. The need for extra-parliamentary struggles as a complement to parliamentary struggles arises from the fact that, "there is no right to recall, the masses have no means to intervene immediately when their elected representatives are found going against their interests, except through the five yearly elections. The elections under the capitalist regime, however free they may be, are intrinsicially loaded against the toiling masses as the press and other means of propaganda are controlled

by monopoly interests and as the ruling party is influenced by the millionaires who donate to the election funds".(CPI 1968 :33)

The Communist Party of India Marxist) (CPI(M)) and its subscribers have been critical of CPI'S understanding of class structure and primary contradictions. Biplab Dasgupta a CPI(M) ideologue, illustrates his criticism of the CPI by referring to the issue of bank nationalisation. The CPI interpreted bank nationalization as an issue which was opposed by the conservative and big business and supported by the progressive sections of the Congress Party. Bank nationalisation according to the CPI took place because of the domination of the progressive national bourgeoisie represented by the socalled 'indicate' and led by Indira Gnadhi.

Dasgupta however feels, that measures like bank nationalisation or expansion of the public sector do not constitute anti-monopoly measures as these conform to the interests of the monopoly section. "It is quite possible for a state ruled by big business to take action against individual business houses, when the latter's activities threaten the overall interests of the big business class as a whole". Actions like these, according to him, are not against the overall interests of the big business class but are indicative of an effort to "resolve the conflicts which

arise from the individual actions of various components of the ruling class and for protecting the ruling class as a whole from those who are being ruled". Dasgupta further argues :

> "So long as the state remains under the control of the big business the latter has no reason to feel insecure because of the extension of public sector in certain lines of production. Big industries like steel or oil are essential for industrialisation and capitalistic development, and alternative to state ownership for these industries is not private Indian business, but private foreign business. The Indian ruling class which is also jealous to protect its dominant position in the Indian market, finds that state ownership is preferable" (Dasgupta 1975 : 123).

This brings us to what, according to the CPI(M) is the nature of the state, classes and class contradictions in India. The issue is important because it will help us to understand how the party wants to sharpen these contradictions and what classes are to be involved in the struggles.

The CPI(M) emerged as a powerful party after the elections in 1967 and became a leading party in the United Front governments formed in Kerala and West Bengal in that year.

According to the CPI(M) the state in India is an organ of class rule of bourgeoisie and landlord classes, led by the big bourgeoisie who are increasingly collaborating with foreign finance capital in the pursuit of the capitalist path of development.

Thus unlike the CPI, for the CPI(M) the ruling classes in India are the big bourgeoisie and the landlord class and there is no question of these classes being progressive in character. The imperialist domination manifests in the increasing collaborative economic activity of the bourgeoisie with foreign finance capital, which according to Lenin is the highest stage of capitalism.

The exploited classes in the countryside are the enormous mass of poor peasantry tenantry and agricultural labourers and workers, organised and unorganised, in the industrial urban areas. Thus the main contradictions according to CPI(M) are between the big bourgeoisie and the landlord classes on the one hand and workers, peasants and agricultural labourers on the other; the external contradiction is between the working class and peasantry on the one hand and imperialism manifested in the domination of foreign finance capital through foreign investments private collaborations and entrenchment of multinational corporations on the other.

The main political enemy representing the dominant classes is the Congress Party and there is no section which is progressive in it and hence there can be no question of compromise with it. "The basic programme of the party" writes Namboodripad, the leader of the CPI(M), "is oriented towards developing the day to day struggle against three

main enemies of the people-imperialism or foreign monopoly; feudalism or all the antiquated socio-cultural economic and political institutions within the country; and the rapidly growing monopoly capital with its foreign collaborators. The leading force in this struggle is the working class; it, however, does not fight on its own, but together with all the exploited and downtrodden sections of the people, toiling peasantry above all" (Namboodripad 1982 : 264-65).

However, the party would like to mobilize all such sections of the people who are prepared to struggle against monopoly capital, feudalism and imperialism. According to Namboodripad :

> "In developing such a combined force of the working class, it joins with that section of the bourgeoisie which is opposed to imperialism, feudalim and monopoly capital; it joins also with all other individuals and strata who, for various reasons, happen to take up anti-imperialist, anti-feudal and/or anti-monopoly positions" (Ibid :265).

Thus Namboodripad explicates the need for a multiclass front under the firm vigilant leadership of the working class. Although peasantry in India is the principal force of revolution and the working class is in a minority, the merit of the working class lies in its capacity to unify the anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggles and lay the foundation for socialist revolution.

Peaceful and Stagist Revolution

Like most Communist parties in South-East Asia, the Communist parties in India including, Maoist parties and groups, adopted the path of stagist revolution - the stage of bourgeois democratic revolution to be followed by that of socialist revolution led by workers and peasants in alliance with the petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie. The completion of the first stage will result in the establishment of an independent economy after the elimination of the domination of imperialism and remnants of fedualism. The second stage consists of the abolition of private ownership of the means of production and establishment of a classless society. Regarding strategy and tactics, the CPI relies mostly on peaceful parliamentary methods and the CPI(M) on peaceful parliamentary methods with preparation for meeting any violent onslaught by bourgeois forces. While the CPI(M) considers that there are no objective conditions or subjective developments for armed struggle, preparation for such struggle on the part of the communists is not necessary. The Marxist-Leninist parties and groups consider that the tasks of both bourgeois democratic revolution and socialist revolution can be completed with armed struggle as the main thrust of strategy and tactics. The three political lines have come to be known

as national democracy (CPI), people's democracy (CPI(M)) and new democracy (CPI(ML)). The differences among the three political lines consist mainly in the role of violence and armed struggle as also the precise character of the stages of revolution.

The CPI, before the split, fought for peaceful democratic reforms in every field and defended and supported all that was progressive in the government at the centre and the states irrespective of which party was in power. Supporting whatever was progressive and opposing whatever it thought was anti-people, it fought for a shift in policies towards the left. It worked for unity of the working class, peasantry, the the petty bourgeoisie and those sections of the national bourgeoisie which had no connections with imperialists. It wanted to build a united front of these class forces in which the working class and the peasantry would be the hard core. The Congress was considered to be representative of the bourgeoisie as a whole, including the progressive sections. The CPI wanted to unite with the progressive sections and struggle against the reactionary bourgeoisie thus adopting a broad policy of 'unite and struggle, collaborate and clash' with the Congress.

The main issues which it put before the people as part of its election platform were : giving land to the tillers; bringing immediate relief to the people for improvement in

their living conditions; strengthening parliamentary democracy; fighting against right reaction and communalism and promoting secularism, and co-operating with the government in strengthening the public sector by seeking aid and technological assistance from socialist countries and promoting non-aligned policy and pro-socialist and anti-imperialist movement (CPI, 1961). The CPI has been reiterating its stand on the peaceful path to socialism and its possibilities. The chief ideologue of the CPI, Mohit Sen, writes :

> "The CPI has not converted itself into a party that is opposed to violence from the angle of adherence to non-violence and on grounds of absolute principle. The CPI is fully aware of the hourly and daily violence being perpetrated against common people by the exploiters and their state.....The CPI however goes a step further to ask : is it inevitable that in India too the revolution will have to be the same as in Russia, China or Cuba? Is it in evitable that in India too the revolution will have to take the form of civil war as in those countries? To these questions the answer of the CPI is that civil war is not an inevitable form of revolution in India. There is a possibility that in India the form of the revolution will be that of peaceful transition. The CPI however is quite clear that peaceful transition is not the only possible form of the Indian revolution. If the CPI does not believe that civil war is inevitable, it also does not believe that peaceful transition is inevitable. The latter is a possibility and CPI will do its best, to make this possibility a reality. At the same time, the CPI will certainly not oblige the ruling class by overlooking the other possibility - that of civil war. It will constantly keep that possibility in mind in its work.....(Sen , 1977).

There are no differences between the two parties in regard to the peaceful road to socialism although at times the views of the CPI(M) appear to be the same. However, at theoretical level the leaders of the CPI(M) deny any strict adherence to the peaceful, path. As evidence we could cite the reply of the CPI(M) leaders to the Home Minister G.L. Nanda who had charged the CPI(M) with a violent approach to socialism as against the CPI which had adopted the new orientation in the international communist movement that emerged after the Moscow Declaration of 1958 as also the statement of 81 parties in 1960. The CPI(M) leaders in their letter to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister took pains to explain the historical evolution of the United CPI and the nature of differences between the two parties and the split. The five CPI(M) leaders, P. Sundarayya, M. Basava Punnaiah, A.K. Gopalan, P. Ramamurthi and H.S. Surjeet taking objection to the Home Minister's charge, specifically pointed out that there were no fundamental differences between the CPI(M)'s and the CPI's positions on the question of peaceful methods.

What can be infered from this is that the differences between CPI and CPI(M) confined to the composition of alliances in the elections and the constituents in the United Fronts and above all the nature of the classes the various bourgeois parties, particularly the Congress represent.

Communist Parties and the Indian Constitution

The bourgeois liberal ideals enshrined in the Indian constitution did not evolve out of any well-knit ideological trend in the freedom struggle. They were there already in a limited way in the institutions and administrative - judicial structure which the Britishers had adopted from the patriarchal Moghul state. They served the purposes of the colonial interests.

After independence all excercises of constitution-making and debates in the Constituent Assembly were simply imitations of the procedures that were followed in the Western countries. However, these bourgeois liberal ideas, utilitarian principles, parliamentary customs and traditions only legitimised the inherited bureaucratic-military structure and also provided a semblance of democracy to the constitution of India. The socialist content, particularly the Directive Principles of state policy, were essentially a patch-work. At the same time the other constitutional aspects like the parliamentary form of government, federalism and centre-state relations were based on borrowed ideas only to be added to and combined with the already existing ones.

The programme of the Communist Party of India adopted in 1968 points to various limitations of the constitution

which favour the enjoyment of the rights and freedom by the rich and exploiting classes and fall as an axe on the lives and liberties of the poor and the exploited classes. At the same time the programme unequivocally states that :

> "Even with these limitations, the existence of these rights in the constitution can be made the platform and instrument of struggles of the people for enlarging democracy and defending their interests" (CPI 1968).

About parliamentary democracy the programme states :

> "Although a form of class rule, India's present parliamentary democracy has enabled the people to a certain extent to fight the distortion of that class rule in the direction of autocracy in the service of reactionary monopoly and landlord interests. India's parliament has provided a forum for the people to intervene in the affairs of the state in a measure and to voice the cause of peace, national freedom and democracy to counter imperialist conspiracies and for demanding social transformations in favour of the people such as land reform, working clas rights, curb on monopolicies etc." (Ibid).

The party is of the view that as long the basic structure of the Indian constitution continues, it is in the interests of the working class and the working people to so utilise the institutions built upon the basis of this constitution as to further consolidate and strengthen their struggles for basic social transformation.

However, while the CPI(M) utilizes the provisions of the constitution for further strengthening of the working class and democratic movements in the country, it has no illusion

that the working class and democratic movements will be permitted to use the parliamentary institutions to such an extent that fundamental social transformation can be carried out. The party recognises that :

> "the threat to the parliamentary system and to democracy comes not from the working people and the parties which represent their interests. The threat comes from the exploiting classes .... It is of utmost importance that parliamentary and democratic institutions are defended in the interests of the people against such threats, and such institutions are skillfully utilised in combination with extraparliamentary activities".(Ibid, p.10).

On the basis of clarification given and pronouncments made at various other places and occasions, it becomes clear that the CPI and CPI(M) do not find anything fundamentally wrong with the constitution, parliamentary democracy and centre-state relations. In fact according to the party ideologues the constitution has to be safeguarded, existing parliamentary institutions have to be strengthened and every attack on these by the ruling classes must me resisted with the strength of the democratic and socialist forces.

The limitations within the constitution like centre-state relations being biased towards the centre, must be rectified and improvements in provisions like the Directive Principles of State Policy must be made by methods and procedures provided in the constitution. Democratic and

socialist forces will have to be rallied to secure majority in the state assemblies and national parliaments to bring such changes in the constitution and to defeat the vested interests which are obstacles for the implementation of progressive policies.

The CPI(M) feels that the problem is with the ruling party i..e. the Congress which distorts and uses these provisions of the constitution to serve its political ends. The CPI(M) in the interests of big business, big landlords and foreign monopolists has gone to the extent of raising the issue of centre-state relations to the level of class struggle between centre and states, although in recent years this tendency has been moderated. Way back in 1969 the attitude of the party towards centre-state relations appeared in their party literary organ Peoples Democracy which reads as follows : "It was a problem that reflects the struggle of two contending class policies, the policies of the bourgeois-led state and the policies which the democratic movement stands for; the interests of the common people and for which the non-Congress democratic governments fight. It is an intense class struggle and its intensity is again seen when the Congress resorts to the most undemocratic methods to throw out these governments" (B. Sen Gupta, 1978 : 126).

However, in recent years this trend has assumed nationwide proportions with the involvement of all kinds of

non-Congress parties and groups. The CPI(M) leadership, particuarly the Chief Minister of West Bengal, have taken a leading part in this process but, interestingly, it appears that whereas the left parties like the CPI(M) are sticking to their stand on constitutional changes in regard to centre-state relations, the D.M.K. and the Telugu Desam seem to be lowering their tone, because of political pressures and also to avoid confrontation with the centre in the interests of stability and smooth working of the developmental programmes, in their states.

The CPI(M) continues to stick to its stand because it has linked the crisis to its class approach to the Indian economy which is evident in the following statement :

> "In other words, the crisis that has gripped the capitalist path of development in India has now projected itself into the political superstructure, namely, the federal structure of the Indian Union. A stage is reached when the struggle from the economic sphere has passed into the political sphere" (CPI(M) 1967 :65).

Forms of Struggle : Electoral Politics and Formation of Coalition Governments

The forms of struggle which the parliamentary communist parties adopt are inherent in their attitudes to various theoretical questions. Firstly, the peaceful social transformation which the CPI upholds (with the caveat that the ruling class uses violence then the oppressed classes will also rise in resistence) determines the forms of

struggles which it to wage. Secondly, the forms of struggles are conditioned by the parliamentary and constitutional methods and the seriousness with which the left parties defend these from the on slaught of the bourgeoisie. Thridly, the forms of struggle which the CPI and CPI(M) evolve also depend to a great extent on the stage of revolution i.e. bourgeois democratic or socialist, within the overall scheme of the stagist theory of revolution. By implication the requirements of each stage will determine the nature of struggles. Lastly, the analysis of the state, classes and identification of primary and secondary contradictions and the nature of class struggle have an overarching influence on the choice of struggles.

The CPI and CPI(M) have chosen, within the framework built around the above considerations, to forge a four-class alliance. In the case of the CPI the four classes are the working class; the peasantry and the landless; petty bourgeoisie and progressive sections of the national bourgeoisie and the reactionary bourgeoisie, feudalism and imperialism. In the case of the CPI(M) it is the alliance of the working class, the peasantry and the petty bourgeoisie; rich and enterprising peasantry and the non-monopolistic; feudalism; and the parasitic landed class and the big bourgeoisie. In both the cases the leadership will be that of the workers and

peasants and agricultural labourers.

The tactics to subserve the above form of struggles range from boycotting and participation in elections to formation of Left Fronts and even lone left party governments. In between these two extremes lie struggles either against or in favour of some policies of the Congress governments. These struggles will be mainly struggles against all the policies of the Congress Party except issues related to foreign policy. Unity and integrity of the nation, for the CPI(M), can be served by forging alliances starting from left parties to communal parties with progressive and democratic programmes formed by certain Muslim other and Hindus. If alliances cannot be formed in areas with weak bases, conductting electoral compaign in favour of other bourgeoisie democratic but anti-Congress and anti-reactionary parties etc., will be the alternative. The overarching immediate principle is to win as many votes and seats as possible in as many states as possible in order to overthrow the Congress governments at the centre and the states. Electoral politics will be a regular and ongoing process. It is not that the CPI and CPI(M) will participate in politics intermittently, if the experience so far is any testimony to this. If the elections are not conducted as per the scheduled time the parties will wage struggles for holding them. If rigging takes place the left parties may take counter measures and sometimes the cadres and members of CPI and CPI(M)

also may indulge in the same. Electoral logic and competition may lead to such an undesirable situation that if the Congress Party or any other anti-communist party fields a candidate on caste considerations in single-caste concentrated areas the left parties also field candidates from the same caste. May be it is because of this that in states like Kerala two or three parties compete for the support of the same communities. In another situation, on account of the logic of electoral politics, one out of two influential candidates from a dominant caste may declare his loyalty to the communist party with the sole motive of becoming an MLA or MP which may not be an un welcome feature for the Communist parties.

Another crucial aspect of electoral politics of Communist Parties, which has something to do with their image as a communist party, is the financing of elections. Necessity of finances, given the everincreasing expenditure per candidate, may make communists compromise on their principles and go in for collections from the rich business communities although these sections may not even show lip sympathy towards communist parties. The worst is the trend whereby influential persons joint the communist parties only with the motive of getting the party support to protect themselves from attacks by several party members. There are innumerable such

situations which face the left parties when they take to electoral politics. To properly understand and analyse these aspects independent academic works on organisational aspects with a focus on the regional dimension of communist electoral politics are needed. Unfortunately most of the electoral studies have not cared to analyse these aspects of the problem so as to make a distinction between the politics of Communist Parties and bourgeoisie parties. Macro level aggregate studies are generally based on calculation of percentages of votes polled and seats gained. The attempt here is to indicate the problems and prospects of electoral politics of communist parties working within a bourgeois parliamentary framework, interacting with social and economic institutions specific to India in terms of both the identity of parties and imparting communist consciousness. This is possible only when organisations-both class based and mass or front organisations - all built with extreme caution and scrutiny.

Work in the Assemblies and Parliament and Extra-Parliamentary Struggles

The attitude of the CPI and CPI(M) towards participation in assemblies and parliaments as discussed in the beginning of this section is not like that of the radical trends that emerged since the mid-sixties in India: whether to participate or not to participate in assemblies and parliamentary elections. Nor

is it similar to that of Rosa Luxemburg and her followers discussed earlier who pleaded for participation in parliament only to expose the rule of the bourgeoisie.

The CPI and CPI(M) have clarified, as discussed elsewhere, that there is no rigidity about the choice of forms of struggles. Both the parties also feel that the working class cannot achieve emancipation by itself. Finding allies is basic to their very law of motion, to their historic revolutionary mission. The formation of united front is therefore, not a transient phenomenon or a matter of expediency. It is a permanently operating factor and indispensable for the working class and its revolutionary vanguard. It varies with the particular stage of revolutionary process and alignment of class forces depending on the specific situations and therefore with the classes and class contradictions and the need to wage a united struggle against the real enemy in a bid to conquer power.

With this understanding the parties went in for United Front strategy which could enable them to win electoral victories and form governments at the states and the centre.

For the first time the objective situation and crisis in the ruling Congress Party and its fall in as many as 8 states out of 17 in 1967 confirmed the policy of the CPI(M). In a resolution passed by the party central committee in

1967 it was stated, "The maturing economic crisis as the post-election political scene evidently demonstrated has passed into the political sphere, ushering in a political crisis which was directly connected with the crisis of capitalism" (CPI(M) 1967 : 46). It was resolved that the changed situation must be taken seriously and the party must shape events that would occur from then onwards.

After the 1964 split the CPI adopted the strategy of forging United Fronts in accordance with its overall programme of National Democracy. According to Achutha Menon, the leader of the party who was a member in the United Front Government in Kerala in 1967 :

> "The Communist Party of India's conception of United Front in the state is that it should prove in actual practice to be a real alternative to the discredited Congress rule in the same way that the administration should be clean, more alive to the grievances and needs of the people, more efficient and quick in the redressal of such of the grievances as are capable of being a redressed within the limits of its resources, more democratic and responsive to the demands and representations made by various sections of the population; in short a real alternative to the Congress" (Menon, 1969 :2)

Explaining the limitations of United Front strategy the same leader said that while it would not be possible for a United Front government to solve all the problems of the people, given the meagre resources of the state, yet, it could give some relief to and also mobilize the people in order to provide an alternative to the Congress Party. He wrote :

> "But within all these limitations, it is possible to give some relief to our much suffering people and give them a better administration than the Congress had given. Only in this way can United Front Government be made to act as potent instrument of struggle against the rule of the Congress, a point of attraction around which all the democratic and revolutionary forces which are out to overthrow the Congress rule in this country can be mobilized" (Ibid, 3).

Menon goes on to quote from the resolution of the National Council of CPI held at Calcutta in April 1967:

> "It is the responsibility of the party to demonstrate through the achievements of these ministries that it is possible through consolidation of left and democratic unity to help these ministries use even the limited power they have to satisfy the urgent demands of the people and implement the programme they have undertaken.
>
> .....The successes of the non-Congress popular governments are above all in their close bonds with the masses and in their capacity to inspire and seek mass co-operation in all walks of national life" (Ibid : 3).

The CPI was critical of the CPI(M)'s understanding of the role of United Front Government. According to Menon, the CPI(M) attitude was that nothing worthwhile could be done under this constitution. The communists need not make earnest efforts to improve the administration and demonstrate to the people that communist-led governments are better than that of the Congress. Although the CPI(M) professed to make United Front Governments an instrument of struggle, it did not have a clear cut policy. If the communist parties enthuse the

people only with hopes of a prosperous future the above objectiye cannot be achieved. Menon interpreted the approach of the CPI(M) as trying to intensify the discontent of the people in the fond hope that it will encourage people to rise in spontaneous revolt against the government. He quotes from the Indian express coverage of the speech of the CPI(M) leader B.T. Ranadive given in London :

> "the task of the Marxist dominated United Front Governments of Kerala and West Bengal was to unleash the discontent of the people rather than to give relief.
>
> Persuant to this tactic, Marxist ministers have been told to press ahead with legislations which were likely to be voted by the centre or the High Court. Such confrontations were designed to tell the masses of the impossibility of carrying fundamental reforms under the present constitution. While not wishing to destro United Front Governments, the Marxists were determined not to surrender fundamental aspects of this tactic" (Ibid :4).

Obviously the CPI has been motivated by its programmatic objective to bring in changes in the administration so as to favour the people and impress upon them that if given massive support in all the states they would be able to provide better administration and an alternative to the Congress. If that were to happen the Communist parties could try to bring in fundamental changes after consolidating the Left and democratic froces.

One issue which illustrates the tendencies of the two parties is the question of food during United Front rule

in Kerala. Whereas the CPI wanted to procure rice forcibly from the landlords and rich peasants, the CPI(M) wanted to get more rice from the centre and if the centre did not oblige then to mobilize the people against the centre for its lukewarm attitude towards strikes and bandhs to raise anti-centre consciousness of the people, although according to Menon, all the partners of the Front wanted to mobilise the people to expose the Centre's failures.

Manon's contention is that the United Front should also try its best to procure as much rice as possible from the landlords and rich merchants and demonstrate to the people in Kerala and other states that the United Front Government's perfomance is better than that of others, particularly in times of crises.

I suggest here that the issue is much more critical and strategic than what was portrayed by the CPI leader. If the procurement of rice is made forcibily from the landlords and rich merchants that might tell on the electoral prospects of the parties. In fact all parties, whether left or Right, are obliged not to go to that extreme so as not to antogonise the landlords, rich peasants and merchants in this respect. On the other hand the Left Parties may keep up their radical postures in the name of struggles against the centre. In fact this is a routine feature in West Bengal where the rich peasants always tried to oust such parties

who went for forcible procurement of rice. (Kumar Gupta 1977 : 43-46). Whereas the CPI saw its electoral prospects in showing that the United Front Government was trying to do it's best, the CPI(M) relied more pragmatically, on fanning the anti-centre sentiments of the people.

However, the experience of the Left Front governments in West Bengal and Kerala has shown that irrespective of whether anti-centre agitations on various issues are right or wrong, they should not go to that extreme in terms of their sustenance in power. Ranadive's statement of 1969 in London was made during the initial experiment of United Front governments and much water has flown under the bridge since then. It appears the United Front and Left Front governments have been emerging more and more as instruments of institutionalising the compromises and reconciliation in the name of solving immediate problems created by the centre.

I have discussed the attitude of the CPI towards the United Front governments, their role and the revolutionary purpose they serve in the long run, as seen by its leaders. In this connection it would be worthwhile to see what some Marxist academicians, who subscribed to the CPI's view of United Front strategy and Left Unity, have to say.

Bipin Chandra who envisages a unity of all the communist parties, including the CPI(ML) groups, formulates very ably the prospects of Left Unity and Left and democratic Front Governments. He feels that one thing that is sure to be gained by the unity of left and democratic forces is checking either authoritarianism or fascism. Such unity is also needed to prevent the emergence of a two party system because, if that happens a crisis in bourgeois politics will be well high impossible. When people are disgusted with one bourgeoisie party they vote for another party and thus exhaust anti-government and anti-ruling class fervour from time to time. It appears, Bipan Chandra draws from the West European experience when he observes :

> "the failures of one bourgeois political party and its critique by the other are bound to strengthen the other bourgeosie party unless the left forces oppose both of them simultaneously..... The left and democratic front is needed above all to provide a real alternative to the people to provide alternative politics - lest they sink into cynicism and politicial apathy.
>
> Thus a very important aspect of the slogan of a left democratic front or left unity is precisely that of coming before the people as bearers of a political alternative behind which they can be mobilised even though it may take several months or several years to be realised". (Panikkar, 1979 : 23 : 27 passim).

The left democratic front would help the communist parties to achieve certain other political objectives like assuring the leadership of the working class, and mass mobilization of the people on an all-India scale.

For Chandra the constitutents of the Left Democratic Front can be all those parties, groups and individuals who are opposed to the capitalist path and are in favour of socialism, defence of national independence and extension and development of political democracy and liberties and a foreign policy of peace and anti-imperialism. The social and class composition of left democratic front has been spelt out by him as follows :

> "The working class, the rural agricultural labourers and poor and middle peasants, the students, youth and intellectuals, the artisans and handicraft workers, the urban poor and lower middle classes, the mass of office workers teachers, lawyers, journalists, engineers and doctors, the shop-employees and the small shop-keepers will be attracted by its programme and policies. The mass of the ranks and officers of the armed and police forces would be sympathetic with it, even when keeping out of its politics because of their non-political tradition. Similarly, the best and honest members of the civil services, who constitute a significant number, would feel happy at its progress. Because of the landman ratio in our countryside, which tends to transform a rich peasant's children into small or middle peasants in one generation, the relatively low standard of living of most of the rich peasants compared with that of the urban merchants, capitalists, top business executive, professionals.....even the sections of the rich peasantry can be persuaded to support the left democratic front at a later stage provided it has the support of the basic masses....(Panikkar 1979 : 32).

Regarding the mutual relations of the democratic front, Chandra feels that they must be genuinely fraternal so as to develop revolutionary forces. The process of building left unity the building up of any particular party and forcibly

propagating its ideas, thus avoiding hegemony by any one party.

Thus the main tasks of left and democratic front are to resist the emergence of despotic power, and to lead the country to socialism through intermediary stages. It should try to capture power in panchayats, municipalities and states and also to unleash a popular struggle whose objective would be only to agitate and politically educate the people but also to get some concessions for the people however small they may appear to some.

> "In order to create conditions for socialist revolution and transformation, there is need for revolutionary socialist parties and groups to contend and compete with each other and to build their own politics and organisation. Yet, they must maintain non-sectarian, non-hostile relations with each other. They must see their mutual contradictions as non-antagonistic, as lying within the camp of the people" (Ibid : p.40).

There are some common features between the CPI and CPI(M) regarding formation of united fronts. At the same time there are also important differences particularly in regard to formation of fronts with communal and reactionary parties like the Akali Dal and the erstwhile BKD and Jana Sangh. The CPI(M) criticised the CPI in some instances for joining the Akalis or BKD or Jana Sangh-dominated governments of Punjab, U.P. and Bihar. But the Kerala experience and electoral exegencies there prove that the left parties cannot keep up this ideological purity. Both parties there, out of sheer necessity to get

the required majority of seats in the Assembly have aligned with Muslim communal parties. The CPI(M), however, has justified this practice by arguing that it is quite possible to influence the Muslims and gain their support for the policies, immediate and long run, of the CPI(M).

The CPI(M) was in favour of joining a leftish coalition where it would be possible to use the governments as instruments of struggle in the hands of the people. At times toppling non-Congress governments by united front governments became an issue for mobilising the people against the centre. The CPI(M) took a political, even an ideological, approach to the coalition governments. The party ideologue Namboodripad writes :

> "The central Committee of CPI(M) therefore attached very great importance to the functioning of these two left oriented coalition governments in which, of course, the CPI(M) played the leading role. While under no illusion that basic changes could be brought about by these governments and while warning the people against these illusions, the central leadership of the party stated that if these governments acted in such a way as to help the people in their struggle, they would become the centres around which the fighting people, not only of the two states but of the whole country, would rally. They would thus become the force which transforms the electoral defeat of the Congress into a political defeat of the ruling classes" (Namboodripad 1981 : 99-100).

However, Namboodripad has altogether a different understanding of the struggles in the parliamentary arena. According to him, working in parliamentary institutions and

forming governments at the state level would enable the party to challenge the class policy of the ruling party at the centre. He quotes from the party programme thus :

> "Even while keeping before the people the task of dislodging the present ruling classes and establishing a new democratic state and government based on the firm alliance of the working class and peasantry, the party will utilize all the opportunities that present themselves of bringing into existence governments pledged to carry out a modest programme of giving immediate relief to the people. The formation of such governments will give a great fillip to the revolutionary movement of the working class and thus help the process of building the democratic front. It, however, would not solve the economic and political problems of the nation in any fundamental manner. The party, therefore, will continue to educate the mass of the people on the need for replacing the present bourgeois-landlord state and government headed by the big bourgeoisie, even while utilizing all opportunities for forming such governments of a transitional character which give immediate relief to the people and thus strengthen the mass movement" (Namboodripad 1983 : 110).

Written in 1964, the above anticipation came to be true in 1967 and non-Congress governments in which left and democratic parties played major role came into being in Kerala and West Bengal. The limitations and possibilities of such governments were to be discussed threadbare by the Central Committee. The tasks before the party and its democratic allies in non-Congress but left oriented parties were understood as follows :

> "...there is one point to be constantly borne in mind by our comrades working in the United Front cabinets. We cannot forcast the actual lifespan of these governments and all the possible vicissitudes they will have to undergo during the tenure of their ministreis. We cannot also definitely say how much relief can be given to the people and what actual possibilities are opened up for these governments to do so. Our ministries without either entertaining undue illusions about giving relief in a big way, or courting despair that nothing can be done under the present leadership, should always bear in mind that they, as the party's representatives, should strive to tender our bonafides to the people. Any failure on this score compromises the party's political line in the eyes of the people, adversely affects the independent mobilization of the people, and their activities; and all this in turn, will not help us to resist and overcome the vacillations, wobblings and sometimes even possible backslidings of some democratic parties in United Fronts and their respective governments. In a word the United Front governments that we have now are to be treated and understood as instruments of struggle in the hands of the people, more than as governments that actually posses adequate power that can materially and substantially give relief to the people. In clear class terms, our party's participation in such governments is one specific form of struggle to win more and more people, and more and more allies for the proletariat and its allies in the struggle for the cause of People's Democracy and at a latter stage for socialism" (Namboodripad 1982 : 109-110).

Namboodripad then raises the question: would it be correct to say that the emergence of popular democratic governments with Left parties having a major role has had no positive impact on the advance of the popular democratic forces in the country? The answer, according to him, is that left front governments in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura with purely left-oriented ministries illustrates that the united

CPI before the split and the CPI(M) after the split performed the tasks of bourgeois democratic revolution. The reason, Namboodripad would have us believe, is :

> "that functioning with all the limitations imposed on them by the specific correlation of class and political forces and constitutional provisions, the governments formed in these two states under the leaderships of the party showed themselves to be alternative of the bourgeois landlord ruling party at the centre, challenging the whole basis of the economy and policy " (Ibid : 114).

In the same way Namboodripad refers to Allende's Popular Unity Government in Chile. This Government fell after three years of existence. This happened because in the dual power system that emerged i.e. one represented by the reactionary forces in parliament and the army and the other represented by President Allende's Ppopular Unity Block with his formal control over the army, the popular government was not based on people's army unlike the case in Russia where alongside the provisional government of the bourgeoisie a government representing the power of the Soviets of Workers and Soldiers Deputies existed. It is this difference which made the victory possible in Russia and not in Chile. This weakness "could have been overcome if the government of the Popular Unity Block and used its power to arm the people, or split had taken place within the armed forces". But it does not mean that the struggle waged by the popular forces in Chile had gone waste, "for although not yet powerful enough

to meet and defeat the counter-revolutionary forces by revolutionary force, the popular forces did advance in the struggle for the formation, continued existence and final defence of the Allende regime". (Ibid, 1982 : 116).

According to the CPI(M) and its ideologues the formation of the communist Kerala Government in 1957, United Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal in 1967, and Left Front governments that came into existence in the post-emergency elections in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura should not be looked upon as the "beginning of a new path of peaceful advance", as the CPI and its ideologues, and right opportunists do. "These should on the other hand, be seen as a stage in the process of the further intensification of the conflict between the mass of the people headed by the working class on the one hand and the ruling classes symbolised by the Congress Government at the centre on the other. There is no question of the ruling classes permitting the 'peaceful replacement' of their regime by a new popular democratic regime". (Ibid : 113).

In spite of all similarities between the left and democratic front governments in India and the case of Chile, Namboodripad points out that, in India the ruling classes had the label of constitutional provisions and whenever non-Congress left oriented governments were removed they were

constitutional coups operated by the centre led by the ruling classes, whereas in Chile it was a military coup. He is implicitly pointing to the reality of the constitutional and federal structure that is specific to the Indian context. The governor being the agent of the centre for all practical purposes, can oust the state governments whenever the ruling classes at the centre want. Military action is not necessary for such ouster. The preponderence of central laws over those of the states will nullify all the efforts of the communist parties to amend laws, incorporate progressive provisions in them and bring adminsitrative reforms through constitutional means. On the other hand this tendency will never defame the centre and the ruling classes, as the experience of 35 years has shown.

Further, the argument about the impossibility of peaceful parliamentary transition by Namboodripad sounds all right, but neither he nor the party programme has cleared the political line of the cobwebs of ambiguity as to how and when to develop a people's army. What are the modalities? How are the utilization of parliamentary institutions for intensification of class conflict and formation of united front governments linked with the creation of dual power situation as was the case in Russia or Chile? Whatever be the interpretation of the Chilean case or the various cases in

India, all are clear example of missed opportunities. Opportunities provided by revolutionary situations are missed because of lack of proper direction towards the ultimate goals or atleast a tentative, broad understanding of the overall strategy. How long the poor can bear with the criticism of, and polemics directed towards, authoritarianism and fascism of the Congress and of right opportunism of the CPI and other revisionist socialists? I think it is because of this lack of direction, which could be traced to a sort of ill-starred revolutionary idealism, that Allende's Popular Unity Block was driven to its fate. It appears in India the left parties have not realised this weakness.

In practice the United Front governments became the sole form of struggle and only led to political opportunism. Persisting with these ministries became the main preocupation of the CPI(M). The Central Committee laid it down as a matter of rule that the party's immediate future fortunes depended upon how it ran the two governments in Kerala and West Bengal (CPI(M) 1967 :67). By implication this practice also led the CPI and CPI(M) to compromise with the other supposedly democratic parties in other non-Congress states also.

The emphasis of the CPI(M) was not on extraparliamentary struggles based on mass action. It adopted a short-cut to

gaining power at the centre obviating the need for class struggle. The Central Committee review in 1967 stated :

> "It is this struggle of the democratic parties and groups in different legislatures and among the people, in parliament and states with non-Congress democratic governments that alone can pave the way for consolidating and widening the unity achieved by the democratic forces and open the prospects of realising the slogan of a non-Congress democratic government at the centre" (Ibid : 79).

The course of political practice from 1967 to the present juncture illustrates what Mohan Ram wrote in 1969 : the practice spelt a maratorium on class struggle (Ram 1969 : 223).

The foregoing analysis points to certain issues of analysis for examining the strategy and tactics of any left party particularly in regard to the way the revolution as a whole is conceived in a long run and short run perspective. Thus what is crucial to see is whether the issues related to the immediate relief to the people and patterns of mobilization around these issues go well with the long run objectives of the communist parties.

Firstly, it is necessary to see to what extent the process of mobilisation around these issues exposes the classes, particularly the working class and the peasantry and other parties in the alliance, by enabling them to

participate in the struggles. This depends upon the extent of mobilization and removal of the social, psychological and other obstacles on the path of their mobilization, irrespective of caste, religion and sex.

Secondly, one has to see whether in the process of exposing the classes to the contradictions and the anti-people character of the state, its institutions and the social system in terms of specific problems which these classes face, imparts an economistic consciousness which generally creates illusions in the present structure or imparts a political and ideological consciousness. This has been discussed in the introductory chapters in relation to Lenin's criticism of struggles promoting economism and Gramsci's criticism of economic-determinism from which many Marxists, including Lenin, suffered. I have argued that struggles, particularly in the Indian context, should be such that they encompass the world outlook of the individuals.

Thirdly, there need not be a separation between the struggles for immediate relief from economic, political and social problems and struggles to do away with the existing institutions. The time-bound nature of the struggles makes the party and followers oblivious to the opportunities provided by situations in which, if planned, a fatal attack on the state and its institutions will not be impossible.

Finally, much of what has been discussed above depends upon the nature of class composition of the leadership at all levels in terms of their motives, class composition and ideological comprehension and the determination of these leading personalities to change their ideological stances according to the changing national situations, particularly the changes in the class contradictions, correlation of class forces, forms of exploitation, oppression by the ruling classes and domination by external forces.

CHAPTER - VI

LAND REFORMS IN INDIA : THE POLICY LOGIC OF THE CONGRESS PARTY

In this Chapter an attempt has been made to analyse the land reform policy mainly of the Congress Party in terms of legislation, implementation and mobilization of the intended beneficiaries. The nature of legislation and its relation to the stated goals, the instrumentalities of implementation, particularly the bureaucracy, the need for and attitude of the Congress towards active invovement of the beneficiaries in the process of land reforms are discussed to throw light on the extent to which the Congress Party has been able to implement its agrarian policy and to understand the evolution of the agrarian structure in India. This is followed by a short discussion of the perspective on agrarian change and performance of the Janata Party and its differences with the Congress Party in this regard. I conclude this chapter by raising the question : Are land reforms relevant any more in the present context?

There is a strong and growing trend of opinion - at the political, administrative and academic levels - to suggest that land reforms are a thing of the past;

what is relevant is rural development. Even the new parties like the Janata Party and Telugu Desam are concentrating on issues other than land reforms. Yet, the issue is far from resolved and land reforms have continued to be the main plank in the programmes of Left Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal. The CPI(M) with its left allies has gained the undivided support of the landless, small peasant and tenants by making land reforms the main issue, notwithstanding some related problems it is facing. The important issue therefore is how do we understand land reforms in the context of the present agrarian structure in India and the strategies of development associated with the emerging new political trends, particularly the right of centre parties in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka with no strong ideological moorings and Left Parties in Kerala, West Bengal, Tripura and elsewhere adopting both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary methods of agrarian change? However, a discussion in detail, of the alternatives to Congress policy logic is not proposed here; rather it points to the alternatives proposed, particularly by the Left Parties within the existing legal and political structure.

The land problem in India is a legacy, partly of the pre-British period but mainly of the British period. The British colonial government destroyed the earlier land

tenures which had favoured the actual tiller and moulded the land structure to solve its interests, especially regular collection of revenue, by creating strong feudal vested interests in the pattern of land tenures.

Major nationalist critics of colonial policy like R.C. Dutt attributed the agricultural backwardness in India to the British created institutional structure, land tenure, credit and revenue systems and marketing structure. The national movement thrived on this general understanding and its social base got widened in the process of mobilisation of the agrarian population which was adversely affected by the impact of British policies. P.C. Joshi presents the major problems that emerged in the process of British rule as : the evolution of the semi-feudal agrarian structure consequent upon the colonisation of the Indian economy, which eventually resulted in the rural-urban cleavage as a major feature of the colonial economy; the evolution of an internal agrarian class structure with three marked modes of exploitation of the direct producers through landlordism, usuary and market mechanism; and the attempt to solve these problems by Western models or solutions far removed from the Indian context. (Joshi, 1975 :17).

On the whole during the national movement the main contradictions on the land front were between the peasantry

and imperialism on the one hand and between the peasantry and feudalism on the other. Whatever legislation the colonial government enacted, it did not touch these basic contradictions and became the central issue that fed the various trends in the struggle for independence.

In independent India attempts to change the feudal land structure bequeathed by the British government have been passive and aimed at striking a balance between the interests of the landed and the landless, within the framework of the fundamental right to property allowing even non-cultivating ownership in a big scale. Such reforms, particularly those intended to smoothen the relationship between the landlord and the tenant and increasing agricultural productivity had been undertaken during the British period also.[1]

Policy and Legislation

The agrarian policy conceived in the initial stages was broad and comprehensive and was even radical from the view point of the ideology of the Congress Party (Chattopadhyay, 1973 : 104-105; Frankel, 1978 : 68-69). This is evident from the reports of Committees that were appointed by the Congress Party which not only recommended abolition of unearned income on land but also conferment of

security of tenure and ownership on the tenants, distribution of surplus land, consolidation of landholdings and co-operativisation of agriculture. While legislation on tenancy reforms and ceiling on landholdings was being formulated after the abolition of zamindari, there was a lively discussion on whether to adopt the Chinese or Russian model of co-operativisation of agriculture, although the different national and socio-economic contexts, particularly the institutional factors, were overlooked.[2] The Second Five Year Plan proclaimed in 1956 that such steps should be taken "as will provide sound foundations for the development of co-operative farming, so that over a period of 10 years or so substantial proportion of agricultural lands are to be cultivated on co-operative lines". At about the same time an Indian delegation visited China to study co-operative farming in that country and gave a favourable report in 1957. In 1959 in its Nagpur Resolution the Congress Party declared that future agrarian pattern should be that of co-operative farming wherein the village panchayats were to operate joint farming co-operatives and farmers were to pool their land under joint management but retain their ownership and get dividends in addition to remuneration for work done. The programme of co-operativisation was to start after the implementation of the ceiling legislation and redistribution

programme to vest the surplus land in panchayat co-operatives consisting of "landless labourers and small peasants" (Tai, 1974 : 237). Some tenancy acts included provision for co-operativisation of agriculture as a follow-up to implementation of tenancy laws.

But, though voluminous legislation on land reform was enacted it did not embody the objective of 'land to the tiller' and co-operativisation. In the initial measures of abolition of zamindari itself, because of the wide definition of personal cultivation with allowance to non-supervision, weak or no legal obligation to the spirit of the law, some landlords could even legally keep for themselves more than what they had before the reform. As the reform was accompanied by payment of compensation, based on the criterion that highest amounts would be paid to those who had lowest income, some of the zamindars created tenures in the names of their family members and got more compensation than what they would have otherwise been entitled to. Provision for the exemption of homefarm lands. In the tenancy reforms, because of many loopholes in legislation such as provision for compensation to be paid by the tenant, right to resumption for personal cultivation, many standing and privileged tenants who were the second layer of intermediaries but non-cultivators gained land and the actual tillers and tenants-at-will were

evicted from land. As H.D. Malaviya had observed in a discussion on land situation in India, "In fact nowhere in the world have land reforms legislation been so voluminous as in India, but nowhere else were there so many loopholes left in the enactments enabling the vested interests, to defeat the spirit of law and exploit them to their own purposes". (Malaviya, 1970 : 70-71)

Based on various evaluation reports and individual studies Utsa Patnaik notes that land reforms have not affected greatly the patterns of land ownership in terms of operational holdings although they have affected the mode of operation in a variety of ways much against the process of transformation of land to the tiller; "while a few dozen vast estates spanning scores of villages each in every district were broken up, the reforms preserved the dominant position of the village level landlord". Whereas the petty owners with non-land sources of income could not help getting their land cultivated by disguised tenants as hired labourers, the big land owners have started taking closer interest in their land by shifting from customary rent exploitation to other forms such as cultivation by attached labourers and crop-sharers in states like Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

Indeed, writes Patnaik, as the NSS Report on Landholdings for 1953-54 revealed, 39.6 per cent of all leased in area was with big landowners operating more than 20 acres

before the tenancy reforms and a large number of unprivileged tenants leased in small holdings : the former leased in for expanding the scale of operation and the latter for livelihood by paying 'hunger-rents', while land reforms helped these rich peasants as their leased in area decreased and operated area increased after the reform. (Patnaik, 1975 : 239).

The programme of ceiling on land holdings, apart from the many loopholes, suffered from a big time-lag between the announcement of the policy in 1953 and recommendations made in 1956 by the Central Government which the State Governments legislated in the early sixties, the state government, could also take some time for enforcement. To quote an example : The government of Rajasthan appointed a committee for recommending ceiling policy measures. The committee took two years for this and the legislation took another few years. It was only in 1960 that the president gave his assent to the Bill. The State Government then took another three years i.e. upto 1963 to make preparations such as formulating procedures and fixing the date of enforcement. Even then it could not proceed because the landlords legally challenged the main provisions. Ultimately the law came into force, after the challenges of the landlords were dismissed, in 1969. Meanwhile, the estimated surplus land came down from 2.3 million acres

to 1 million, only a part of which was to be allotted to the landless. This has been the case in many other states as well, particularly Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Assam and even West Bengal where the expected surplus was reduced drastically because of the gap between the announcement of the policy and the enforcement of legislation. The ceiling laws faced many other problems in various states such as exemptions to various categories of land including even lands under commercial concerns, efficiently managed and mechanised farms. No wonder that the surplus taken over by the various state governments was not more than 2 million acres, only one-third of which was actually allotted to the landless.

Further, the central government had provided to the states only some broad guidelines in terms of the objectives of legislation and implementation and did not make it compulsory for the state government to follow certain uniform principles regarding the nature of legislation, its timing and the modus operandi of the programmes. As a result about 20 different enactments were passed in different states and union territories and the changes in land structure envisaged by them differed greatly, depending on local pressures. Underlying these were electoral implications for the Congress Party. This, on the whole, frustrated the objectives of the policy. Ambiguity at this level also led to problems of constitutional propriety in regard to the fundamental right to property and the need for

the consent of the President for a land reform act to come into effect. On the one hand agriculture is a state subject and on the other, an act passed by a state government has to have the assent of the President. The relation between the President and the government in the Indian federal polity being what it is, the Congress Government at the Centre went against such land reforms acts passed by states where its influence would be weakened. For instance, the Congress Party did not take too kindly to the Agrarian Relations Bill passed by the Communist Government in Kerala in 1959, and withheld the assent of the President to it, although it embodied only those recommendations which were made by the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee.[3] After the dissolution of the Communist Government, elections took place and the Congress Party formed the government which amended many radical provisions of the Agrarian Relations Bill enacted by the Communist Government although the original version of the Bill was still a 'bourgeois agrarian reforms' measure within the framework of the constitutions, respecting the landowners' existing rights and providing for compensation for any land acquired by the government.

Same is the case with the Left Front Governments formed in 1967 and 1969 in West Bengal where radical land reforms

laws were enacted within the constitutional framework but which were thoroughly modified when the Congress Government came to power. The Land Reforms Act passed by the present West Bengal Legislative Assembly dominated by the CPI(M) has been pending with the Central Government for years for the President's assent.

Implementation Process

In any programme the machinery of implementation assumes great importance. It should be unbiased and free from influence and pressures, particularly from vested interests who are likely to suffer as a result of the implementation of the programme. An alienated bureaucracy, loyal to the colonial government and the zamindars, was a heavy burden on the tenants and peasants during the colonial period. The new land reform measures aimed at attacking the feudal structure which the old officials had been supporting or in the evolution of which they played a prominent role. The implementation of these laws should have been assigned to an altogether new machinery. It was naive to expect that the same machinery, without any external pressure, would sympathise with the beneficiaries of the programme especially when the losers were still powerful and free to influence it by all means.[4]

It was wise on the part of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee to have recommended that separate Central Land Reforms Commissioners with an independent machinery of their own be established and "vested necessary powers" and be charged with the task of agrarian reforms that required a new spirit and progressive outlook. It is no exaggeration to say that such an independent organisation could have been free from local vested interests. This important recommendation was, however, neglected by the leadership. It is in this background of the suggestion of Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee that P. C. Joshi argues that "restructuring the administrative system can open a new chapter in land reforms implementation" if the process of restructuring results in tilting the balance of power in the political system in favour of the rural poor. A beginning can be made in that direction by asigning the implementation of land reform programmes to rural poor oriented commissions at the centre and the states (P.C. Joshi, 1978 : A. 78-83). However, Joshi's suggestion involves crucial political decisions, because Land Commissions with a new spirit can play a neutral role only on the basis of wide political support, particularly from the party in power or from the organisations of the landpoor and the landless, if the practice during the United Front and Left Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal is any guide.

The bureaucracy at the state level in India has, contrary to the popular belief about its neutrality, strong links with society. Its links with the society in many concrete ways conditions its behaviour at every level. Drawn from the upper classes they share the ideology of the status quo and those who are likely to lose in the reform have easy access to them. This may not be the case with the theorists and planners at the central level but they are nowhere in the picture of implementation after the measures are incorporated into the plans and enactments. The state level bureaucracy, because land offers status security and privilege in the society, will see to it that land reforms are not implemented in the interests of the class of which they themselves are not a part. The panel on Land Reforms appointed by the Planning Commission of the Government of India found that the zamindars of Purnea district, Bihar, had very good relations with the Revenue Officers there and with their help they had enlarged their lands. Today the ex-zamindar are big landowners who own thousands of acres in the districts of Bhagalpur, Saharsa, Purnea, Monghyr and Gaya (Fadia, 1984 : 66).

The local level officials are still more conservative steeped as they are in the ideas of caste superiority and inalienability of the right to property in land. Moreover

being underpaid by the department they "do depend on the landed gentry for their sustenance associate with them for prestige; in some cases they themselves become landlords and work as agents of the landed gentry in an informal sense of the term".

Thus the national leadership by making the land reforms a non-political issue failed to enlist the support of the land-poor and the landless for the purpose of implementation and for creating the required political atmosphere; nor was a new administrative machinery enlightened with the spirit of law created. But in every situation to be reformed vested interests are inherent and the reform works only in that context. Not surprisingly, the state governments, with a few exceptions, made no efforts to stop abuses of the land reform laws and rarely allotted additional funds for the implementation of land reforms or appointed additional staff. The same traditional village officers, 'struggling with jurisdiction extending over several villages and on a salary of some Rs. 30 to Rs. 60 per month, frequently collaborated with the landowners. Higher officials were few and were responsible for 100 to 200 villages each and they were over-burdened with other responsibilities. Above all was the highly unequal legal battle between the tenant and landlord which the

legal responsibility of the tenant to establish himself as a tenant led to. The whole process went on in a presumed political vacuum as the Congress party did not carry on any propaganda either by publishing the provisions of land reform laws or by organising the tenants to claim their rights in a way that would have prepared them psychologically for facing any retaliation from the landlords. The implementation suffered a great deal in Jagirdari areas such as Telangana and parts of Hyderabad, U.P. and Rajasthan where the patels and patwaries, the village officers were appointed by the erstwhile Vatandars or Deshmukhs who held a number of villages. Thus land reforms in India under the Congress flied in the face of the ideals of equity, justice and even democracy and socialism, and ended up in the manoeuvres of zamindars, landlords and conservative and corrupt bureaucracy.

Some related problems notwithstanding, it is only the United Front and Left Front Governments led by the Communist Parties in Kerala and West Bengal that tried to see that the officials work in line with the spirit of land reform laws and sympathise with the intended beneficiaries in all their difficulties. Progressive officials have been taking this opportunity of doing whatever could be done within the legal framework. On the other hand the associations of tenants and agricultural labourers have created

a political atmosphere, balancing the pressure of the landlords (Namboodripad, 1959 : 26-35, Konar, 1977 : 4-6, Latif, 1982 : 67-88).

Political Action and Mobilisation of the Beneficiaries

One of the factors that assumes crucial importance in the successful implementation of land reforms is political action for mobilisation of the intended beneficiaries. This is so in the context of both evolutionary and peaceful land reforms intended to rationalise the agrarian structure with a view to preserving the overall status quo, as well as land reforms undertaken by Communist Parties and governments formed by them within the pre-revolutionary or bourgeois social framework, particularly to gain massive support of the landless and landpoor so as to integrate the process of reform with the advancement of class struggle for the ultimate sucess of a social revolution. This is what happened in bourgeois capitalist revolutions in America and France where the agrarian structure has been rationalised and agriculture has been modernised so as to subserve the capitalist production and in Communist revolutions in Russia and China where land struggles were integrated with revolution and agrarian structures were modernised to make

them substantial bases for the socialist pattern of agricultural development.

On the other hand, successful implementation also involves some sort of control over the landed gentry so as to check their manoeuvres to thwart the reform. The losers in the reform, by virtue of their position, prestige and soci-economic mobility, generally react to the reform in a negative way and join counter revolutions if the objective of the reform is a revolutionary upheaval.

Historical experience in the Third World countries like Colombia, India, Iran, Mexico, Pakistan, Israel, United Arab Republic, the Philippines, Taiwan and South Korea has also established that political will plays a crucial role in land reform and determines, in the process, the relation between the promise and performance, goals and their realisation. However, the intention here in comparing the status quo and revolutionary models is not to equate the two models of land reform in this regard; rather, it is to stress the importance of the political aspect in taking land reform to its logical end. This makes it possible to compare countries like India with countries which have taken up land reforms to prevent any long run threat of communist revolution (e.g. Iran and Pakistan) and countries which faced immediate threat of Communism

(e.g. Phillippines and Taiwan) and to understand how far the Congress Party has gone to implement its own policy of land reform and agricultural development.

The political elite in Mexico, Taiwan, the U.A.R. and Iran have shown strong political commitment by personally identifying themselves with the reform. Firstly, these elites did not represent the landed gentry and this created a link between them and the peasantry. Secondly, the political leaders in these countries with their 'resolute will and dynamic personality, with compassion for the peasantry could energize the reform movement, provide it with spirit and dramatise its results. In doing so, such a political leadership could help generate popular enthusiasm for reform and weaken landlord resistance. Cardenas in Mexico, General Chen Cheng, a close associate of Chiang Kai-Shek, in Taiwan and the Shah of Iran did all that was possible in their countries which included using military force. The Taiwanese Government began to make the necessary arrangements for land reforms in January 1949, actual enforcement started in Arpil of the same year and was concluded in September. It took only a few months to finish an unprecedented and difficult task. The monarchy of Iran under the Shah presents the most interesting case in point, the Shah's

unpopularity in his later years because of his contact with the U.S.A. notwithstanding. In a typical way he said "it was no glory for me to reign over a people who are poor and probably hungry.....In a country where 75 per cent of its inhabitants dwell in rural areas, surely the bulk of the monarchy's responsibilities should be towards them". (Tai, 1974 : 279). The Shah himself gave up his vast royal estates distributed public land and severed contacts with the large landlord class in order to distribute private farms; toured the country extensively denouncing the obstructing landlords as 'arch reactionaries', arousing warm peasant response. The landlords, individually or collectively, expelled the peasants, destroyed their houses, damaged their irrigation canals and attempted to bribe land reform officials and followed up by a murder. The government arrested many landlords, banished some from their towns and the lands of some were confiscated. In an area where a land reform official was murdered by landlords in their drive against the reform, martial law was imposed, a day of national mourning was declared and the perpetrators were severely punished.[5] The Shah personally castigated the 'black reaction' and 'pseudo-clergymen' and said "black reaction's mentality has not changed for thousand years... what kind of respect can people who exploit their fellow men

have for religion?" (Ibid : 286).

Apart from personally identifying themselves with the land reform programmes the political elite, in the cases of successful implementation, have seen to it that the intended beneficiaries participate in the process of implementation. They have even institutionalised this participation in the form of land reform committees, land reform commissions and publicised the land reform programme through semi-governmental agencies. General Chen of Taiwan, though an anti-communist, tried to emulate the land reforms programme of Communist China and published even communist documents related to land reforms which his troops had captured.

Thus it appears that there are many possible ways to implement land reforms once a political strategy is formulated, and land reform has all the potentiality of being used in communist and anti-communist strategies. Land reform acquires much more relevance in countries where the land-man ratio is low. In countries under foreign rule it provided a setting for combining anti-landlords struggles with anti-imperialist national movements.

The land problem was the central issue in rallying the mass of rural population in the national movement in India

led by the Congress Party. Although the Communist Party emerged late it gave a new dimension to the national movement by interpreting the land question from a Marxist-Leninist perspective. While the strategy of the Congress stressed the contradiction between the national situation and foreign domination the, Communist strategy stressed contradictions between the classes within India society with a class approach on the one hand, and the contradiction between national interests and foreign domination on the other.

Thus, the political and economic developments in contemporary India have to be considered as a continuation of those that evolved in the national movement and also in the process of evolving and implementing certain land reform policies even during the British rule.

Gandhi and Mobilisation of Agrarian Classes

The main theoretical source of the Congress Party's understanding of agrarian change and political mobilisation of the agrarian classes was provided by Gandhi. The national movement in India acquired a mass character because of his strategy of mass mobilisation for achievement of independence. He advanced slogans and devised tactics of struggles, the spirit of which has been derived from the core of Hindu culture and the political ethos of ancient India.

Gandhiji's analysis of the land problem and its solution in the theoretical framework of Trusteeship was also at the root of the tactics he devised for political action on the agrarian front. Steeped in the Trusteeship theory, he found no material and objective contradiction between landownership and landlessness; between the zamindar and tenants. His principles of Satyagraha and non-violence had never allowed the tenants to put up any violent resistence to either the Raj or the zamindars even if it were to be spontaneous. He always preached class conciliation and co-operation of the landed and the landless. Not surprisingly, this attracted landed gentry and the businessmen into the national movement and his identification with the masses, unlike the earlier urban and western oriented leadership, earned him considerable charisma. (Moore, 1966 : 371). Yet, Gandhi's charisma notwithstanding, this policy was inadequate building a vigorous and persistent struggle against the Raj and to provide a solution to the problem of conflicting interests on land.

We find a great difference between his subjective analysis and formulation of issues on that basis and the objective situation that obtained on the agrarian fron in India. In fact the Indian National Congress had neglected the land problem in the beginning and started

identifying with Kisans only when it realised that the large landed class was in union with the British. This union, for a long time, kept the zamindars tied to the administration because of the administrative and political necessities of the Raj and because the zamindars performed a dual role of revenue collectors and landlords to safeguard their overlordism. The basic contradiction between the union of an alienated group of zamindars and the Raj on the one hand, and the peasants and tenants on the other hand was reinforced by the various sporadic outbursts of rural unrest. Although, on certain occasions, the British Raj passed Acts for the betterment of the tenants it never offended the zamindars. In fact in situations of serious peasant revolts "the government turned to the landed aristocracy ... to provide the basis for an anti-revolutionary front". Yet, in this context, as W. Norman writes :

> "Gandhiji's own attitude was no one class should benefit at the expense of another but all should unselfishly work together.....landlords and industrialists, peasants and workers should not each other as enemies but practice mutual forbearance and tolerance; one should provide good living and working conditions, take only a just amount in rent and pay their wages.....".

But then under the application of this teaching neither the landlords lost anything nor the peasants gained anything.

It was clear that Gandhi did not see the strategic aspect on the land front that the colonial interests and

the interests of native landlords were intertwined. Rather, he considered the colonial interests per se as distinct from the interests of the native landlords. It is understandable that his trusteeship theory failed him to see the dynamics of mutual strengthening of the colonial and native vested interests and as a result his tactics never sharpened either the contradiction between the peasantry and the Raj or the contradiction between the peasantry and the landlords (Frankel, 1977 : 35) Pandya, 1978 : 1077). This logic led Gandhi to champion the peasants' case against that of the colonial Raj, but not against that of the Indian landed interests. As Abha Pandhya has put it : "Gandhi treated British colonial interests as a distinctly non-Indian category and when peasant interests were adversely affected by government policies and actions, Gandhi defended peasant interests with vigour. But when peasant were circumscribed by indegenous landed interests the Congress under Gandhi counselled mutual trust and understanding and compromised continuously in favour of India vested interests". Henningham (1982) also argues that the colonial state combined with the Bihar Congress, with which Gandhi was very much associated, thwarted the emergence of radical initiatives; whereas the extensive mobilisation of the peasantry shook the framework of the British rule it did not

transform the social order.

But even the strategy of mobilisation of the peasantry against the British Raj and British indigo planters was not carried out with much of vigour and Gandhi was always cautious to see that it would not politicise the tenants too much. On all occasions he unequivocally opposed consolidation and strengthening of the peasants' political solidarity against the zamindars.

Champaran and Kheda in Bihar and Gujarat respectively are the two episodes which illustrate Gandhiji's tactical logic of deliberate prevention of politicisation of the tenantry, not even for strengthening the Congress, which resulted in a super imposed unity of all classes against the British Government. As far as Champaran is concerned it was a case of British indigo planters vs. the tenants. The bone of contention was the 'thinkatia' term which required the tenants to plant 1/7 of every acre of land with indigo for the landlords. At the request of an agriculturist, Gandhi paid a visit to Champaran from Lucknow where he had gone in connection with the annual session of the Congress. After investigation Gandhi was convinced of the gross exploitative nature of the 'thinkatiya' system and the miserable conditions of the tenants. Frankel argues that Gandhi "could have responded to the peasants' complaints by interpreting the 'thinkatiya' system and the

miserable conditions of the tenants. Frankel argues that Gandhi "could have responded to the peasants' complaints by interpreting the 'thinkatiya' system and the general condition of cultivators as symbols of British exploitation, thereby converting the economic grievances of the tenants into an anti-British or pro-Congress movement. Equally plausible, given his social and economic policy, he could have challenged the legitimacy of the entire system of land relations that permitted a handful of land owners to exploit the thousands of landless tenants who worked on the farms" (Frankel 1978 : 36-37). But Gandhi did neither of the two things; he made all efforts to convince the British planters that they should withdraw the system. He thought that doing more than that would provoke the government and the Congress would come into the picture which might lead to his arrest and the tenants would be left with their problems. This attitude gave some scope to the government which ultimately instituted an enquiry. Thousands of peasants gave testimony to their sufferings which they endured in the last hundred years. On the basis of the merits of the peasants' case 'thinkatiya' was legally abolished. This was a victory and a test for the tactic of a non-political approach to the conflicting interests of the British planters and the tenants. But Gandhi was the first to realise that it did not significantly alter the balance of social power in Champaran district or decisively

change the impoverished circumstances of the villagers.

In Kheda (Gujarat) political implications were direct. The Congress organised a no-revenue campaign against the government. There was no question of conducting a non-political campaign. But the speciality of Kheda was that the farmers were stratified in terms of their landownership or tenancy rights unlike those in Champaran where they were not a heterogenous group involving contradictions within the peasantry. To forge a united front in Kheda was a difficult problem. The government decided to attach immovable property for non-payment of taxes which would lead to a greater loss for the large farmers. If they paid taxes the government would intimidate the small ones to follow suit. Thus in Kheda "both national and eagalitarian values demanded the subordination of class interests to common goals". Gandhi advanced his theory of trusteeship against any class-based organisation of the peasants against the government, consistently. After a protracted peaceful no-tax campaign the government yielded and ultimately announced relief from the payment of revenue only in regard to the poorer cultivators. But as Gandhi said "the end was far from making me happy" as the collector retained the prerogative as to who was to be granted relief. Yet, the campaign advanced the social and national goals of the movement, as for the first time the poor cultivators developed awareness. It is true that the Congress under Gandhi led no

rent campaigns against the zamindars when the tenants were in distress. But in the case of physical attacks from the side of the zamindars with the aid and assistance of the government, when the tenants' resistance was likely to get out of hand he would prompt the tenants to pay the rents. On one occasion he counselled the tenants : "let me warn you against listening to the advice, if it has reached you, that you have no need to pay the zamindars any rent at all. I hope you will not listen to such advice, no matter who gives it. Congressmen cannot, we do not, seek to injure the zamindars. We aim not at the destruction of their property. We aim only at its lawful use" (Frankel, 1978 : 50-51). Of course at the same time Gandhi advised the zamindars to become the trustees and trusted friends of tenants.

Gandhi's conception of agrarian change did not lead him to advocate any rupture with the existing land structure. He recommended mechanisation of agriculture in some special cases, but till the end Gandhi glorified primitive economy, and the agrarian structure and landlord-tenant relationship at it was. At times he openly declared his opposition to the abolition of jagirdari and zamindari system which was on the agenda of the Communist Party. One such occasion was the assurance he gave to the zamindars of the United Provinces in an interview in 1934 :

> "I shall be no party to dispossessing the propertied classes of their private property without just cause. My objective is to reach your heart and convert you

> so that you may hold all your private property in trust for your tenants and use it primarily for their welfare..... The Rama Rajya of my dreams ensures the rights alike of Prince and Pauper. You may be sure that I shall throw the whole weight of my influence in preventing a class war ... supposing there is an attempt to unjustly deprive you of your property you will find me fighting on your side. Our socialism or communism should be based on non-violence, and on the harmonious co-operation of labour and capital, the landlord and tenant".[7]

Gandhi however, modified his ideas on the future of the zamindari system though not on his concept of non-violence. While he continued to pursued zamindars to be trustees of the tenants he warned them that if the zaminders did not change they will die a natural death. In reply to a question by a socialist in 1938 he said "the main difference between your view and mine is whether the zamindari system is to be mended or ended. I say it should be mended, if it cannot be mended it should end itself". By 1947 Gandhi totally modified his ideas about the process of changing the land structure. He said that "the present owners of wealth would have to make their choice between class war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees..... The state would regulate their rate of commission and their children would inherit property only if they proved their fitness for it", (Pandya, 1978 : 1079). Abha Pandya raises a pertinent question : "were Gandhi's attempts at harmonising the conflicts between Kisans and zamindars tactical in nature, to be resolved after independence?"

Later developments in the Congress Party indicate that while he did stick to his conciliation tactic he was not happy with the landed interests within the Congress, as a result of which he was slowly pushed away from an important position in the Congress politics. Pandya's imagination is rich enough but, given the continued dominance of the landed gentry in the Congress and the absence of radical elements favouring the organisation of the poor peasantry independently, he would have been completely isolated even if he were to be alive. Political history of Congress Party, since the death of Gandhi illustrates that it has drifted away further and further from the poor peasantry.

Nehru and the Agrarian Question

As for the methods of achieving desired goals Nehru, the most dominant figure after Gandhi, believed in peaceful and non-violent path for resolving all problems. Nehru differed from Gandhi so far as the modernisation of agriculture was concerned. As such in his land policy, modernisation and scientific cultivation assumed more importance. What came in the way of modernisation and scientific cultivation in agriculture was the zamindari/jagirdari system, the removal of which would serve both the purposes : elimination of zamindari and jagirdari as a political symbol of the Raj by way of assumption of state control over land; and elimination of an age-old tenure to

promote scientific cultivation and co-operativisation of agriculture.

With the achievement of independence the Congress Party as a political organisation did not require the massive support of the peasants and tenants. With the British gone, the zamindari and other feudal land tenures were to be removed by legislative action requiring no political mobilisation. By 1947 radical elements, favouring the peasantry, in the Congress were out to join the All India Kisan Sabha. Nor was there any organised political resistence from the side of the zamindars, although in some states like U.P. and Bihar they fought a legal battle. The whole process was smooth because : the legislation abolishing zamindari provided for compensation, 'to wrap the wounds, if any, of the zamindars', by a graded system in which the lowest holder would get the highest compensation. Many zamindars managed to get more than what was due to them, by dividing their estates. Some zamindars, especially the larger ones did not lose too much in the process of zamindari abolition. As the example of U.P. shows, they were able to exercise considerable influence in the legislature and got some of the radical proposals of the U.P. Zamindari Abolition Committee watered down.

The measure was neither a reform nor a political action but one that aimed at a smooth transfer of revenue rights

to the new state without needing coercion. Reform of this tenure was long overdue and in fact would secure legitimacy to the new government with no radical rupture in the agrarian structure and improve the image of the zamindars who had alienated themselves and had no sympathy of any articulate section of the Indian people because of their continued support to the British till the very end.

In the absence of any radical elements in the Congress, which would have led to serious apprehensions among the zamindar's of losing much in future, the zamindars came to have a stake in the abolition of zamindari rather than its preservation. They could get rid of the stigma of their association with British imperialism while acquiring a new legal status much in line with the new atmosphere. This, of course, the zamindars realised more and more in the process of implementation of the reform. As Whitcombe writes, some ex-zamindars took it philosophically.

> "The abolition of zamindari ushers in a new era in our country. We must not give way to despair and shall adjust ourselves to new situations Kanwar Guru Narain told the U.P. Praja Party. Thus if the permanent settlement and British regulation tied them to the British Crown, abolition of zamindari tied them to Congress, its philosophy and its ideology. It was only a matter of time that they adjusted and took advantage of this tie and rebuilt their fortune by taking up new activities in commercial agriculture trading, or manufacturing or by entering politics (Whitcombe, 1980 : 117).

Similarly, Frankel points out :

> "most of the largest zamindars in Uttar Pradesh adjusted very comfortably. Although the greatest Taluqdars (owning 500 squares miles or more) were often too removed from the daily operation of their estates to check the machinations of their land managers, those with middling size estates (50 to 300 villages) were not only able to retain very large farms ranging upto 2,000 acres but also used their capital for agricultural improvements that added considerably to their income. In addition, by virtue of their social prestige as leaders of local Rajput lineage, they could mobilise support of few caste members of dependent lower castes to become powerful political figures, often shifting allegiance from one party to another for maximum leverage" (Frankel, 1977).

studies on the social background of Congress members have revealed that Congress leaders were predominantly high-caste Hindus intellectuals, lawyers, journalists, teachers, physicians and landowners since the 1920s till independence. After that there was a predominance of landed interests both at the national and state level. Tai has compiled data on the composition of the Congress party, social background of Congress Party members in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly of Uttar Pradesh and also of all other parties from various sources. He has shown that even those who reported themselves as non-agriculturists had their main sources of income in land and tended to favour the landed interests in any law making. At the national level the non-landed interests were in a commanding position in the first two decades after independence (Weiner, 1969 : 836) Tai, 1974; 95-97). Relevant

data are given in Tables 6.1 and 6.2. Studies made on subsequent elections have shown that the Congress Party's rural base, in South as well as North, consisted of landlords and rich peasants (Weiner, 1962, 1969; Ladejinsky, 1972; Hero, 1976; Kaushik, 1982). Ladejinsky writes :

> "The rich and well to do farm groups in India count very much in the inner councils of Congress Party both in the centre and the states, especially on election day.... though their number is small, their influence is widespread through the control of local seats of power and much else. The so called vote banks are still controlled by them as illustrated by the fact that in the Punjab Assembly, 45 out of the 64 members are rated as big owners, in Haryana the respective members are 30 out of 52, and in Madhya Pradesh 96 out of 220". (Ladejinsky, 1972 : A.129).

Table 6.1

Proportion of Lawyers and Agriculturists in the Congress Party and in the Lok Sabha, India

Leadership Groups		Occupational Groups					
		Lawyers		Agriculturists		All Occupations	
	Year[a]	No	%	No	%	No	%
Congress Party AICC	1919	104	64.6	7	4.4	160	100
	1921	83	50.9	4	2.5	163	100
	1923	72	21.3	5	1.5	338	100
	1956	108	16.9	71	11.1	639	100
MPs[b]	1952	130	38.3	62	18.3	339	100
	1957	52	23.3	54	24.2	324	100
	1962	90	26.4	93	27.2	357	100
	1967		22.2		36.8	N.A.	N.A.
U.P. MLA[c]	1952	86	22.1	151	38.8	390	100
	1957	49	17.1	108	37.8	286	100
	1962	39	15.7	105	42.2	249	100
Lok Sabha (All parties)	1950		32.0		6.4	313	100
	1952		35.6		22.4	N.A.	N.A.
	1957		30.3		29.1	N.A.	N.A.
	1962		24.5		27.4	N.A.	N.A.
	1967		17.5		31.1	N.A.	N.A.

Source : TAI, 1974 : 95
a) Refers to the year of election b) Members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha c) Congress Members of Legislative Assembly in U.P.

Table 6.2

Congress Party Representation in the Lok Sabha, 1960

Occupation	Congress Party MPs			Main Source of Income					
			Owned	Land	%	Business	Profession	Other	Unknown
	No	%	Land						
Agriculture	54	21.1	53	48	3.0	1	-	2	-
Business	25	11.2	17	4	-	18	-	3	-
Law	52	23.2	36	14	12.0	2	20	4	-
profession	16	7.1	10	1	7.0	2	6	-	-
Public Work	63	28.1	35	25	26.0	4	2	2	4
Other	13	5.8	6	3	6.0	-	2	2	-
Unknown	1	0.4	0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	224	100	157 (70.1%)	95 (42.4%)	54 (24%)	27 (12.1%)	30 (13.4%)	13 (5.8%)	5 (2.2%)

Source : Tai, 1974 : 96

At the grassroots level also political power is still concentrated in the hands of the rich peasantry who invariably belong to the high castes. Introduction of Panchayat Raj and democratic institutions has not changed the socio-economic background of the leaders at the grassroot level. A study by D.S. Choudhary on the socio-economic background of the village panchayat leaders in a few villages of Rajasthan after the introduction of Panchayat Raj in 1953 has found that the leaders in the village are mostly rich peasants and landlords. Though there was some change after the introduction of Panchayat Raj institutions this change could also be due

to the impact of land reforms (Table 6.3)

Table 6.3

Landholding Pattern of Panchayat Leaders in Rajasthan

Size of Land holdings in Acres	Pre-Panchayat Raj	Post-Panchayat Raj	Total
5-10	N.A.	17 (19.32)	17 (11.64)
11-15	8 (13.79)	21 (23.86)	29 (19.86)
16.20	3 (5.17)	27 (30.68)	30 (20.55)
21-25	11 (18.96)	12 (13.64)	23 (15.75)
26-30	15 (25.86)	8 (10.23)	23 (16.44)
31-40	17 (29.32)	2 (2.27)	19 (13.02)
Above 50	4 (6.90)	N. A.	4 (2.70)
Total	58 (100.00)	87 (100.00)	145 (100.00)

Source : Choudhary, 1981 : 57

In his study Choudhary found that though a large number of leaders (36.22%) in pre-Panchayat Raj period held more than 30 acres only 2.27% of them were found to be in this category after the introduction of Panchayat Raj. However, in view of the average holding in Rajasthan, which is 10 acres, even the leaders of post-Panchayat Raj period could be considered rich, because 23.86% owned between 11 and 15 acres, 30.86% between 16 and 20 acres and 23.87% owned between 21 and 30 acres. Thus over 80 per cent of the leaders owned more than 10 acres.

Furthermore, Choudhary contends, small holders i.e. the 5 to 10 and 11 to 15 acre classes are also rich because of their other occupations such as business. Moreover, the leaders elected on the basis of revservation are also from the landed class.

Choudhary also reports that a large proportion of the leaders in pre-Panchayat Raj (46.55%) and post-Panchayati Raj (29.54%) periods were agriculturists, but a significant number of them in pre-Panchayati Raj (32.75%) and post-Panchayat Raj (19.31%) had both agriculture and business as their sources of income. (See Table 6.4)

Table 6.4

Occupation of Panchayat Leaders in Rajasthan

Occupation	Pre-Panchayat Raj	Post-Panchayati Raj	Total
Agriculture	27 (46.55)	26(29.54)	53(36.30)
Business	3 (5.17)	21(23.86)	24(16.43)
Agriculture and Business Both	19 (32.75)	17(19.31)	36(24.65)
Others including weaving, carpentry, cobbling, jajmani etc.	9 (15.51)	24(27.27)	33(22.60)
Total	58 (100.00)	88 (100.00)	146 (100.00)

Source : Choudhary, 1981 : 59.

We feel that the situation would not be much different in other states in view of the fact that the pattern of agrarian structure and the nature of the land reform legislation has similar features. Thus the policy logic of the Congress meant a reform from above with an implicit belief that land reforms mobilise the ex-zamindars and make them conscious of their responsibilities and make their role more participatory and democratic. Tenancy reforms came in the second phase after making the rights of zamindars and jagirdars on land inheritable and inalienable, interestingly, by the abolition of these tenures itself. So much so that whatever the people below had to expect through the implementation of tenancy laws could seem to be illegal and against the fundamental, inheritable and inalienable rights of the ex-zamindars, except by state mediation. But even here the actual tillers were far off. Whatever redistributive potentiality the tenancy laws had, it benefited the privileged and occupancy tenants thus making them also, like ex-zamindars, economically articulate. The ultimate sanction of the tenancy laws being legal and the decisions of the courts being taken as final, only the occupany tenants could win the legal battles effectively. For the various layers of unprivileged tenants who actually worked on the land, getting the land remained only a hope. In fact the assumed legality and formality of land reforms on the one hand and lack of any effort on the part of the Congress Party

to mobilise these people enabling them to claim their rights, only weakened these people politically while the already socially and politically articulate sections of the peasantry were given a push by the implicit favouritism in the laws and the logic of conciliation between the privileged and the unprivileged.

This apart, events such as the suppression of the armed struggle of the peasantry in Telangana in the erstwhile Hyderabad state and the removal of the first communist ministry (1957-59) in Kerala in 1959 are important and illustrate the political bias of the Congress Party against the peasantry behind the assumed legal and constitutional nature of the land reforms policy. While the supression of the armed struggle of the peasantry against the autocracy of the Nizam was making strides the police action undertaken by the Union Government under Nehru and Patel and the follow-up through the symbolic abolition of jagirdari operationalised the Congress ideology of land reforms. While the ex-jagirdars lost the patronage of the Nizam the Congress came to their rescue and put them in a comfortable position on par with the ex-zamindars and also made them participate in the democratic process and play their role in the independent nation through the process of national integration. Thus behind the facade of national integration the police action

obstructed the process of revolutionary land reforms and created a political atmosphere condicive to the implementation of evolutionary, conciliatory and peaceful land reforms.

The Kerala event is much more glaringly illustrative (Lietin, 1982). It has something to say not only about the Congress ideology but also about the new parliamentary course of peaceful revolution adopted by the then Communist Party. The Communist ministry attempted a sort of obstruction of the manoeuvres of the expected losers in the reform and mobilisation of the expected beneficiaries by way of a Marxist class approach to the problem. It passed an ordinance, within 24 hours of its coming to power, banning all evictions of tenants; intervened in the bureaucratic approach to land reforms and maintenance of records; encouraged peasant movements for occupying the lands; and controlled the police making it a neutral agency. It enacted radical land reforms viz., the Agrarian Reforms Bill, very much within the spirit of the recommendations of the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee and sent it for the consent of the President. However, much before that, vested interests started organising against the state government, held demonstrations, led processions and waged what is generally called a 'liberation struggle'. They also sent representations to the Central Government for ousting the State Government and imposing President's rule in the name of law and order. President's rule was imposed a few days

after the receipt of the Agrarian Reforms Bill for Presidential assent. Thus the Kerala event is an illuminating example of both the policy logic of Congress land reforms on the one hand and the obstruction of the process radical land reforms by the party on the other. The Communist Party (especially the Left wing) again got a chance to do something about land reforms only in 1969 when it formed a United Front Government. In the meantime the Congress Government had thoroughly amended the Agrarian Reforms Bill. The time-gap between the legislation and its implementation gave the landlords enough scope to readjust their holdings to make the impending laws ineffective. The two events in Telangana and Kerala suggest that the Congress Party will oppose radical land reforms, whether they are undertaken by the peasants themselves by violent means or whether they are undertaken by parties wedded to peaceful and parliamentary means. The treatment meted to the United Front Government in West Bental in 1967 and 1969 only confirmed this attitude of the Congress Party.

Indira Gandhi and the Rise of Rich Peasant Lobby

Indira Gandhi who dominated the national scene as the leader of the Congress Party after the death of Nehru made no innovations in regard to the policy of mobilisation of the deprived agrarian classes for effective implementation of land reforms. She confined herself to the legal, bureaucratic and

elitist methods in formulating and implementing land policies and felt that even state governments formed by other parties should also adopt the same methods and also meted harsh treatment to those forces who adapted extra-parliamentary methods of struggle and organisation of the peasantry. It is during her period that many peasant uprisings took place in the country viz., Naxalbari movement in West Bengal, Srikakulam movement in Andhra Pradesh and the land grab movement of C.P.I. and C.P.I.(M) in many states.

In the early seventies agrarian unrest started spreading to other states like Bihar, U.P. and Rajasthan with proliferation of extremist groups led by various Marxist-Leninist Parties with redistribution of land among the peasantry as the main plank of their programme of agrarian revolution. The crisis acquired new dimensions with the peasants under the leadership of Marxist-Leninist parties taking up arms in the above struggles.

It is against this background that the Congress Party leadership established a Central Land Reforms Committee in 1970. This had been suggested by the Congress Agrarian Reforms Committee (1949). The Central Land Reforms Committee in its report (1972) noted with serious concern that landlessness was increasing, exacerbated by technological change that accentuated income differentials and recommended a ceiling of 10-18 acres of perennially irrigated land, but it left the decision on that to the states.

Later, the draft Fifth Five Year Plan suggestively mentioned that the major obstacles in the implementation of land reforms were of a political nature : absence of strong peasants organisations, currupt local officials and the absence of unambiguous, firm and dynamic political direction. Like the Central Land Reforms Committee earlier, it also recommended the formation of village and block level committees of tenants, and landless agricultural labourers and conducting mass campaigns, but it recognised that mass organisations cannot be created by legislative provisions or executive orders.

The political possibilities of such recommendations being implemented came for discussion in the Chief Ministers' conference presided over by the Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi in September, 1970. The Chief Ministers' conference on land reforms brought to the fore, on the one hand the political attitudes of Chief Ministers towards land reform and on the other hand the inability of the Prime Minister to act firmly on her own, inspite of the fact that she was in favour of some sort of radical land reform, having understood the causes for rural tensions which had been feeding the Left Parties. She referred keenly to the cases of Mexico, Japan and Iran where land reforms had successfully been implemented and agricultural growht and prosperity achieved, and cases of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Tzarist Russia which did not care

to implement land reforms successfully and as a result collapsed. Understandably, she was indicating the intensity and vigour with which a programme had to be undertaken afresh in India. As for suppressing the resistance of the losers in the reform, she seemed to favour measures that were taken in Iran and the way the difficulties were overcome in Mexico.

The Shah of Iran was committed to the reform and prepared to implement it at any cost; the Minister for Agriculture Arsanjani (1961-63) warned landlords: "Divide your land or face revolution or death".(Tai, 1974:280). Arsanjani managed to purchase and distribute, a total of 8042 villages within a period of 18 months. The stiff resistance of the landlords was ruthlessly suppressed by all means. The landlord was simply allowed to retain one village while incumbent cultivators obtained the rest of the land they had been working on.

The way in which the leadership in Maxico overcome the problems is suggestive of the possible means by which various difficulties like estimates of ownership and operational holdings, compensation, categorisation of various soils in various regions and prohibitive administrative costs in countries like India can be overcome. In Mexico, campesinos (peasants) could obtain land through three alternatives : restitucion, dotacion and ampliacion, that

is, restoration of land to is original landowner; grant of land; enlarging the beneficiary's grant of land by additional grant. They could either, with proof of title, recover their land from large holdings located within a seven-kilometre radius of the village in which they liver; or they could get land by a fresh grant; or, finally, they could expand the area of land they received under the two previous procedures through additional grants by the government. In all cases, the government provided the land oblock, without having to award individual titles. With four fifths of Mexico's re-distributed land coming through dotacions the government could launch the reform programme without being bogged down in a detailed land survey.

The cases of Mexico and Iran are presented, at the risk of a slight diversion, to illustrate how eppedically land reforms could be accomplished even in the context of a 'status quo' model and also to explore the intention of Indira Gandhi in referring to those cases and to that of Japan in the Chief Minister's conference on land reforms. The Chief Ministers, however, were hardly impressed by these arguments. Not only did they put up stiff resistance to the proposal of a new land reform programme but claimed that abolition of intermediaries itself brought 20 million tenants

into direct contact with the state after which the ceiling laws were implemented and those who did not benefit through the abolition of intermediaries were covered under the ceiling laws. Thus, they paid no attention to the failure of ceiling laws and the widespread rural unrest but instead pointed to the necessity, as conceived by them, of giving adequate support to the farmers and landowners by way of credit and other inputs to increase production. Moreover, they suggested to the Prime Minister that rural unrest was engineered by 'professional agitators' and should not influence the policy of the government. The Prime Minister on the other hand tried to convince them saying that "political parties may organise, even exploit, rural discontent but they do not create it. The time has now come to face the facts".

It was clear that Mrs Gandhi was circumscribed by the Chief Ministers who represented the landed gentry in the country side; that she could not do anything drastic in regard to land reforms which would attack the interests of the rural oligarchy as easily as she got privy purses abolished or the banking system nationalised.

On the other hand the mass base of the party was so weak that she did not think of by passing the state leaders to make a strong appeal to the masses through party cadres and

organisational units at the local level. Efforts initiated in this direction ended in the realisation that electoral victory did not reflect corresponding organisational strength at all levels. The upsurge of mass enthusiasm for leadership of Mrs. Gandhi was based on the hopes created by the populistic slogans on which she depended for maintaining her personal image of commitment to socialism on the one hand, and some progressive measures such as bank nationalisation and abolition of privy purses, which did not touch the agrarian structure in any way, on the other.

But one thing about her commitment to land reforms is very clear. All the vigour with which she struggled with the conservative elements in the party, undertook progressive measures including constitutional amendments for diluting the content of fundamental right to property for implementing radical land reforms did not shake the power structure at the state, district and taluq levels, not the speak of the villages, at all. Put bluntly all these moves had nothing to do with effective mobilization of the peasantry for radical land reforms and changes in the agrarian structure.' While she was committed to some reform, her dependence on the landowners represented by state leaders became indispensable for electoral victory and continuance in power. What she expected, it appears, was that the progressive measures she took and effective

bureaucratic action would neutralise the big landowners. This saved her from taking any hard political decisions like abandoning the alliance with big land owners or creating an alternative peasant base by starting a mass campaign against the big land owners. She did not consider them to be so powerful as to obstruct the formulation and implementation of special programmes for the landless, landpoor sheduled castes and scheduled tribes involving redistribution of land within the framework of legislative provisions enacted by various state governments.

The foregoing discussion about land reforms in India, especially during the seventies, clearly points to one thing. The Congress Party, under the leadership of Mrs. Gandhi was not quite willing to join issue with the landed interests in order to push through the land reforms programme. At every stage it compromised with these interests which ultimately jeopardised the achievement of land reforms to which the party was committed, at least in principle. The resoluteness which the party had shown on other issues, e.g. bank nationalisation, abolition of privy purse and clamping emergency etc., was clearly lacking in the case of land reforms. The main reason was the Congress Party's unwillingness to antagonise the landed interests on which it ultimately depended, especially

at the state, district and lower levels, for political and electoral support. Successful land reforms would have meant mobilising the small peasantry and the landless against the large land owners. The party was politically not in a position to adopt this course of action.

The official report of the Task Force on Agrarian Relations under the chairmanship of P. S. Appu embodied this political impasse and also the compromise with the existing socio-economic structure in the rural areas contingent in the impasse. The Task Force clearly pointed out that "in the context of socio-economic conditions prevailing in the rural areas of the country, no tangible progress can be expected in the field of land reforms in the absence of the requisite political will.....Considering the character of the political power structure obtaining in the country it was natural that the required political will was not coming forth". About the philosophy on which this political power structure is b[illegible] and the constitution which embodies it, the task force said : "In a society in which the entire weight of civil and criminal laws, judicial pronouncements and precedents administrative tradition and practice is thrown on the side of the existing social order based on the inviolability of private property an isolated law aimed at the restructuring of property relations in the rural areas has hardly any chance of success". However, the Task Force felt that whereas land to the tiller meant all

land should go to those who perform various operations like ploughing, sowing and transplantation yet it found itself inclined to think that in the context of the social economic and political conditions prevailing in the country such a law will not be enacted and if enacted will not be implemented. Hence the recommendation that "the aim has to be far more modest - not land to the tiller, but reduction in the "incidence of absentee ownership of land". It is well known that it is the definition of personal oultivation that was a major factor in the "systematic and large scale ejection of tenants".

Rural Development Without Land Reforms

The present thrust is on the reinforced implementation of rural development programmes which, unlike land reforms, do not involve any controversy such as political mobilization, legal hurdles, constitutional changes or a committed judiciary. They don't have anything to do with the emerging agrarian structure so as to embarass the rural rich. In fact historically the nature of rural development and community development programmes since the very beginning, did not envisage any mobilisation of rural poor for a basic change. As Daniel Thorner Whites, whereas the various land reform programmes were initiated against a political background of national movement, against foreign rule and peasant movements, particularly in Telangana, Tanjore, North Bengal and Punjab, community development programmes came rather quietly. Most of the

projects were initiated by Indians and foreigners and were based on humanitarian and philanthrophic grounds rather than any theory and practice aiming at bringing about basic structural change in the rural areas. (Thorner, 1981 : 117)

Various studies on the impact of rural development programmes on the agrarian population, have shown how various agencies for rural development have been manipulated and controlled by the emerging rural rich, which itself is a result of the planning process. As such in the context of the agrarian structure, notes Desai, these very "institutions became the additional instruments in the hands of the emerging proprietary classes in rural areas to utilize, divide, control and repress the rural poor. Actually the apathy and protest from the rural poor were also a result of the consequences of effective operation of these associations in favour of rich". (Desai, 1981).

In recent years the process acquired international dimensions in all respects. The government has gone for aid and advice in a big way from the international agencies for formulating and implementing rural development programmes revealing, thereby, that it is not interested in touching the rural rich either by cutting their assets to size or by taxing them. Rural poverty could be alleviated by borrowing finances from outside. Brara (1983) gives an account of the various aspects of the political economy of present day

strategies of rural development programmes, particularly the way financial aid and policy advice come from international agencies i.e. World Bank, ILO, FAO, ESCAP and ADB. It is but natural that these agencies insist upon, directly or indirectly, the adoption of their strategy and developmental models.

While the World Bank suggested the redirection of the investment towards target groups to increase their purchasing power this was to be done by changing the composition of demand, production and employment, rather than a prior redistribution of assets to effect basic structural change and create conditions of equitable access. Whereas the suggestion of FAO for equitable redistribution of land held good and was a departure from the conventional approach it did not involve any new thrust in terms of any deliberate political decisions for radical change. Brara argues that developmental models propagated by international agencies are misleading and ... importance of the redistribution of assets as a prerequisite rather than its possibility as a consequence is evident. Primarily this implies a need for land redistribution, since the problems of power and access in rural areas are directly related to the size of holdings". (Brara, 1983 : 388). But, while Brara argues that agrarian reforms - the prior redistribution of land - is a precondition for meaningful rural development and poverty allevation. A government that

basically represents and is controlled by the same dominant classes cannot suceed in carrying a power restructuring measure like land reform.

Even during the emergency Mrs. Gandhi depended very much on the Chief Ministers and their cabinet colleagues in the states and tried to exhort them to implement land reforms with a redoubled zeal by adopting adhoc measures. In a crucial meeting of the Chief Ministers in March, 1976 concerned mainly to discuss land reforms it came out that even during the emergency not much was done in regard to land reforms under the Twenty Point Programme. While the Chief Ministers mentioned legal bottlenecks and administrative obstacles as the causes for the slow progress of land reforms during the emergency the Ministry of Agriculture bemoaned that it was not legal bottlenecks but the absence of political will which had prevanted the enforcement of measures of land reforms. This points to the fact that even during the emergency those who possessed land above the ceiling could not be touched. Though the emergency was full of excesses the landlords were definitely not its victims.

The discussion in the foregoing pages illustrates that whatever organisational structure that evolved during the emergency for implementing land reforms did not give any impetus to the political mobilization of the peasantry.

On the other hand the elections, which followed the lifting of the emergency, showed that the peasantry also voted against the Congress Party except in states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh to some extent, where the distribution of land took place and emergency excesses did not affect the peasantry directly.

After a brief interlude of Janata Government, which created some expectations by way of the symbol of the party, criticism of the Congress for having gone back on Gandhian principles, setting up of a land reforms commission for making suitable recommendations in regard to land reforms, and which came to an end before it could implement the recommendations, the Congress Party under Mrs. Gandhi came back to power. There has been no change in the strategy of the Congress in regard to the rural poor particularly the landless and the landpoor. On the contrary the programmes for intensive cultivation, subsidized inputs to the small farmers and special programmes for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been reinforced. Mrs. Gandhi's and her party's restoration to power served a number of purposes in clearing off many controversies within the Congress : first of all it legitimized the emergency in retrospect, created an illusion of socialism embedded in Congress (I) policies and undertook some symbolic political actions with a socialistic rethoric.

The restoration of Congress showed that the policy logic of Congress in regard to land reforms would continue. It reinforced the attitude of the big landowners that land reforms are a thing of the past and what is necessary is a multiple programme of promotion of high production, ensuring remunerative prices for farm produce and introducing crop insurance.

The question that this leads to is why a leadership which compromises with the landed class is voted into power, especially when the landed interests constitute a small section of the society. The answer to this question has something to do with the political strategy and practice of a particular governing elite which takes on a dual role : as the guardian of the class of haves in reality on the one hand and as a crusader for the rights of the poor and downtrodden, though only symbolically. It appears that for preserving the disparity between the reality and illusion in a class-society an effective mediating agency which is appearantly neutral to the various classes is a necessity.

As David Selbourne writes :

> "illusion is a crucial element in a class society which is held together not merely by repression but mechanisms which disguise its basic nature and the greater the cruelty of inequality, the greater the degree of exploitation and human misery, the greater the need for falsehood to permeate the world which the citizens of a polity experience. So that in a society such as

> India's the gross nature of illusions which govern it play no less functional a role than do the battalions of armed police which have been created to defend the interests of the ruling class in the thirty years of Indian democracy the world's largest - since independence" (Selbourne, 1979 : 29).

Conclusion

The main concern of this Chapter has been to examine the problems of land reforms policy of Congress in the last few decades. Although the policy itself seemed to be radical and was in line with the spirit of the national movement and goals of equity and productivity on the land, legislation for zamindari abolition encouraged the zamindars to retain a major part of their assets thus leaving no scope for a radical transformation in the agrarian structure. Within this limited scope subsequent measures aiming at benefitting the tenants did not provide any tangible gains to the rural poor - tenants-at-will and other underprivileged groups. Because of the many loopholes and legal complexity, only the articulate section of the tenants - the rich, the privileged and occupancy tenants on the whole-could take advantage of the tenancy laws. The legislation for ceiling on landholdings also met the same fate because of exemptions for some categories of lands depending on the specificities of the states and regions. Added to this is the flaw of fixing the ceiling on individual holding, low ceiling and lack of provisions in the legislation for taking severe action

against the evaders and benami landholders.

The machinery of implementation has been crucial in the failure of land reform measures. We argued that this, apart from other reasons, was mainly due to the continuance of more or less the same old bureaucracy, both in terms of organisation and ideology. As a result the bureaucracy co-operated with the landed rather than the landless and landpoor. Another crucial factor is the lack of effective supervision by the centre to check the lethargy, deliberate or otherwise, on the part of the leadership of the states in implementing land reforms.

Still more crucial has been the factor of mobilisation of intended beneficiary classes and also checking the manoeuvres of the losers for providing a conducive atmosphere for the implementation of land reforms. While tracing the strategies of mobilization of agrarian classes followed by the Congress Party under the leadership Gandhi during the anti-imperialist struggle I argued that though the strategy of Gandhi had the potential for securing a mass base among the peasantry for the national movement, yet it was unable to focus on the basic contraditions on the agrarian front i.e. the contradiction between the alliance of the native landed gentry and the British interests on the one hand and the interests of the peasantry on the other. With the emergence of Nehru as the dominant figure in the Congress, and the changing composition

of Congress Party brought about by the departure of radical elements, the need to mobilise the poor peasantry was relegated into the background and issues of productivity, modernity and legislative measures assumed more and more importance. It is in the context of this political atmosphere that major policies of land reforms and co-operative farming were formulated and implemented till the death of Nehru.

The repercussions of the failure of land reforms were clearly felt during Mrs. Gandhi's regime. The agrarian crisis took a serious turn in the late sixties manifesting itself in the form of struggles of the peasantry and land grab movements - so much so that the leadership of some movements aimed at creating revolutionary bases. The efforts of Mrs. Gandhi to make a dent in the problem failed, because within the party she found herself circumscribed by the Chief Ministers and other party leaders representing the interests of the rural rich and the landlords. She could not think of an alternative to the then obtaining leadership and the existing agencies of mobilization of the landless in the countryside because that would have told upon her own existence and the continuance of the party in power.

The subsequent policy decisions about land reforms, particularly Fifth and Sixth plans, recommended the participation of the beneficiaries of land reforms in the implementation process, but not much was done from the side of the party

as the instrumentalities for ensuring the participation were not specified. Even during the emergency the much talked about land reforms did not yield much although the intention to do something drastic about land reforms - particularly to destroy the feudalistic influence of the landed gentry while allowing the small landlords to continue to enjoy their priveleges, as was done in Iran and Mexico - was emphasised.

We have also argued that the rural development programmes and the present thrust in the implementation even at the cost of aid and policy advice from the international agencies are illfounded. Many studies have shown that rural development programmes, even with ensured and effective participation of the beneficiaries but without radical land reforms have only accentuated the differentiation between the rural rich and the rural poor.

It is against this background that the alternatives provided by the Left Parties particularly the CPI and the CPI(M) acquire meaning and have to be understood and analysed. The crucial questions that one needs to ask are : How is it that the programmes of the Left Parties continue to include land reforms and mobilization of the landless and the landpoor as one of the main instrumentalities in the realisation of the devised goals? How is it that in the same agrarian situation redistribution of land, security to the tenant cultivator and reasonable wages for agricultural labourers precede any meaningful formulation and implementation of rural development programmes of the Left Parties and receive maximum emphasis?

Do they consider land reforms as an end itself or a means to their revolutionary goals of transformation of the socio-economic structure as a whole and achieving a socialist society? How do they link the means and ends?

However, there are enough problems even in areas where land reforms have been implemented to a large extent because of the strong left movement and also because the left parties have formed governments with other parties with a common minimum programme of land reforms within the confines of the basic principles of the Indian Constitution. But there, the problems are of a different type and they highlight the limitations of the system in the successful implementation of radical land reform on the one hand and the dilemmas of the left movement on the other (Krishnaji, 1979 ; Mencher, 1983 ; Herring, 1983). Academics apart, opposition within the dominant left parties and from other left parties stressing extra-parliamentary struggles has focussed on the dilemmas of the dominant left movement.

As it is, there is a significant difference between the changes that have taken place in the agrarian structure of Kerala and West Bengal both of which have a strong left movement and the changes that have taken place in the Congress ruled states (Laxmi Narayana & Tyagi, 1982). Further, there is not much difference between the changes in congress ruled states and non-Congress-now left states like Tamil Nadu (Guhan, 1983 ;

428-449) and more recently Andhra Pradesh.

Footnotes

1. For a detailed account of the kind of land reforms and programmes for rural development which the colonial government undertook see (Fraser), Government and Politics in West Bengal (Delhi : Mittal Publications 1979). The reforms recommended by Sir Andrew Fraser were brought out as a report entitled, 'The Administration of Bengal under Sir Andrew Fraser (1905)'. The most interesting of all the measures i.e. tenancy legislation, agricultural extension operation, maintenance of records and experimental and demonstration farms etc., is the formation of 'Agricultural Association' with an intention to promote 'agricultural progress through people themselves' and people meant zamindars and merchants (For further reference in this regard to reforms under the British rule and their impact on the agrarian population see R.P. Dutt (1979 : 266-275).

2. Three types of co-operatives were created in many parts of India i.e. i) tenant farming and better farming societies ii) collective societies iii) and joint farming societies. The members in the first type worked on individual plots and co-operated only in obtaining loans and grants; the members of second type worked collectively on land which they did not own individually and members of the third type had individual ownership of land which was pooled together under joint management (Tai 1974 ; 237-238). It is said that the co-operative movement as such started from above with the ideas of Gandhi and Nehru rather than with the initiative of the farmers and without any psychological preparation. The major problem, it appears was that there was no intention to involve the farmers and the landless in the reorganisation of the agrarian structure towards an equitable ownership of property on land which alone could change the psychology of both the gainers and losers for co-operative thinking. In the absence of that, which was the main plank of co-operative farming in China, it was naive to expect results from any half hearted move. The initial enthusiasm and support for progressive legislation for ceiling laws and redistribution dwindled as the years passed and as a result the land that was available for co-operativisation was extremely limited. To the extent the movement progressed it faced problems of inequality-economic, social and political-as all kinds of

members were admitted i.e. farm labourers, tenants, owner farmers and landlords where each member would get benefits according to his share in the land. After a field survey Daniel Thorner reported that, "firmly lodged in chief positions of village power to-day, the dominant families stand ready to seize the lions share of the vast programme of co-operative development. As the peasants say : Jis Ke Pas Jitna Hai, Utna Use Milta Hai (a member will benefit corresponding to what he possesses)". Cited in Tai (1974 :239).

3. There is a marked difference between the land reforms measures initiated by the Communist Government in Kerala and those initiated by Congress Governments in other states. Firstly, as soon as the Namboodripad government came to power it passed an ordinance forbidding evictions of all sorts which were taking place in all other states. Secondly, the Agrarian Relations Bill provided that the crop sharers and the tenants-at-will be explicitly provided rights on par with the substantial tenants. Most other states did not give security of tenure to these categories. Whereas the laws in other states favoured the rich peasants, in Kerala those who worked on the land were also to be benefited. Thirdly, agricultural labourers consisted of a fixed proportion of the produce from the land. Fourthly, whereas in most states landowners could retain most of the land under personal cultivation; which in fact caused mass evictions, in Kerala this right was strictly limited and defined and could even be withheld in the case of any owner who possessed more than 10 acres of double-cropped land (Bettelheim, 1968 : 221-222).

4. As Ronald Herring has put it "the assumption that the bureaucracy constitutes a neutral instrument to be used by the state to act on and change society implies that values can be transmitted directly through the bureaucracy from the legislators. But in fact officials, both high and low, may not share the values in the policy model at all. Even if the values are shared, the concrete interests and social milien within which the bureaucrat operates may prevent the consolidation of strong and enduring committment to the reforms goals" (Herring, 1983 : 39). Not reconstructing the bureaucratic apparatus bequeathed by the Britishers implied this assumption. Yet the negative attitude of the Revenue Officers in the process of implementation has been acounted for in number of studies. One important sutdy in this regard being that of the Planning Commission's Committee on Tenancy Reform which explained the attitude of the Revenue Officers as follows:

"After all, ideas about the evolution of tenant's rights as against the landlord have been of a comparatively recent growth. The conception of land as property and the rights and privileges of the owner of the property are deeply rooted. The unconscious resistance of revenue officers to liberal ideas can, therefore, be easily understood. In the case of conflicting evidence there is greater tendency to believe the landlord than the tenant, the presumption being that the poorman is less likely to speak the truth" (cited in Ibid : 40).

5. For details of episodes in the process of implementation of land reforms in Taiwan, Iran and Mexico see Tai (1974 : 279 passim 286).

6. W. Norman, The United India and Pakistan p. 227, vide Thomson Jannui, Agrarian Crisis in India : The Case of Bihar, New Delhi : Orient Longmans, 1974 p. 4.

7. "Gandhi's Interview to a delegation of United Provinces Zamindars", July 1934 Mahratta, August 12, 1934, cited in R.P. Dutt, 1970 : 628.

8. Under the influence of socialists inside the Congress and All India Kisan Sabha and partly because he believed only in some coercion on the landed class, Nehru opposed the strategy of class conciliation adopted by Gandhi. His economic philosophy did not suffer from the nostalgia from which Gandhi suffered and he often said that economic freedom of the masses demanded some coercion of vested interests. He wrote in 'Whither India' in 1933 "Congress cannot escape having to answer the question now or later for the freedom of which class or classes in India are we especially striving for? Do we place the masses, the peasantry and workers first, or some small class at the head of our list? In my own mind it is clear that if an indigenous government took the place of a foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact, this would not even be the shadow of freedom". In regard to the way the vested interests were to be divested he wrote : "history shows us that there is no instance of privileged class or group or nation giving up its special privileges or interests willingly.....Always a measure of class coersion has been applied, pressure has been brought to bear, or conditions have been created which make it impossible or unprofitable for vested interested to carry on. And then the enforced conversion takes place". Cited in Frankel,(1978 : 53)

9. See for a succinct note in this regard Economic and Political Weekly (May 19, 1983); "Land Reform is Dead, Long Live Land Reform".

CHAPTER - VII

POLITICS OF LAND REFORMS IN INDIA AND THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE CPI AND CPI(M)

In the last Chapter I discussed the policy logic of the Congress Party-inspired agrarian reforms with special reference to patterns of mobilisation of agrarian classes and intended beneficiaries. I focussed on the fact that even within the status quo model, which does not involve a major transformation in the agrarian structure, countries like Mexico, Iran and Japan had succeeded in mobilizing the intended beneficiaries though not on class basis in the Marxist sense of the term. In India, on the other hand, particularly during the regime of Indira Gandhi, no radical initiatives superceding the party and the leaders at state level could be taken, because of the strong opposition from the landlords and rich peasants.

The left parties, particularly the CPI and CPI(M), much in line with their programme of bourgeois democratic revolution, believe in breaking this impass. They wish to carry out land reforms within the bourgeois constitutional framework and link it with their task of completion of the bourgeois democratic revolution on the agrarian front by

eliminating feudal and parasitic elements in the agrarian structure and creating scope for rapid development of agriculture through an enterprising peasantry with the middle and poor peasants and agricultural labour classes as the base. The overarching political form which the state and political power assume in this process is termed as 'National Democracy' by the CPI and People's Democracy by the CPI(M). However, the bourgeois democratic revolutionary tasks can be completed only when the parties come to power through electoral struggles both in the states and at the Centre so as to be able to bring necessary amendments in the constitution. Till then the parties believe in leading struggles on the agrarian front on the issues of land reforms and follow up programmes like institutional finance and remunerative prices etc. If, and when, they come to power they would implement these measures effectively and bring minimum relief to the rural poor working on the land.

The strategy and tactics of the communist parties on the agrarian front have to be put in the context of their analysis of the structure and primary contradictions in Indian agriculture. It will be relevant to discuss here the agrarian class structure in India as viewed by some leading Marxian political economists, supporters of the left parties and their criticis. Such an effort will enable us to

understand the perspectives of communist parties in regard to the agrarian structure.

Most of the academicians have carried out investigations only in certain areas and have tended to generalise the findings to Indian agriculture as a whole. As a matter of fact empirical knowledge at the grassroots level is very much lacking. As dealt with in the previous chapter Indian National Congress during the national movement limited the struggles of peasants and tenants to opposing British imperialism and the spontaneous struggles against the native feudal intermediaries. After coming to power, it adopted the same policy towards the feudal intermediaries.

This kind of land reform by concessions and payment of compensation to the intermediaries and preservation of their privileges has only resulted in the evolution of landlord-capitalist process of development in Indian agriculture. It may be relevant to quote here what Lenin said about the programme of the party which was the main political organisation of the liberal monachist bourgeoisie in Russia after 1905 and which tried to protect the interests of the landlords:

> "The object of their proposal that the peasants should pay compensation for the land, i.e., should buy the land from the landlords through the state is to transform the upper sections of the peasantry into a party of order.....Compensation will be an easier matter for the well-to-do peasants and will fall as a heavy burden upon the poorer peasantry. No matter what regulation may be drawn upon paper, providing for purchase by the village community, etc., the land will in practice remain inevitably in the hands of those who are able to pay for it. Hence, the compensation scheme will strengthen the rich peasants at the expense of the poor"[1]

The post-independence agrarian situation in India seems to justify Lenin's apprehensions. The transfer of ownership rights to the peasants with compensation to the landlords under Indian land reforms laws has resulted in the emergence of a rich peasantry along with the preservation of landlordism. The policy of land ceiling has, in the main, led to inflation in the number of absentee landholdings, malafide transfers and Naukarnamas although concentration in terms of the operation and control has been modified a little. The failure of the co-operative movement, which served as an impressive slogan, is the logical end of the whole process.

The question of the mode of production and the development of capitalism in Indian agriculture is an on-going controversy.[2] But historical experience of societies especially those which have experienced rapid and progressive development of the forces of production on the one hand and those which have experienced the most

retarded and protracted development on the other should help one to evolve a framework for fixing suitably the Indian situation. The arguments of Lenin while explaining the evolution of agrarian structure in Russia merit a mention here. Although the context was development of capitalism in Russia, I argue that there are some general features in Lenin's argument which can explain the situation in India. Unlike in Western Europe where there was a bourgeois democratic revolution of peasants and where, by the end of the twentieth century a bourgeois agrarian structure was fully established and relation between wage-labour and capitalist farmers had developed enough to undermine any intermediate category of agrarian population requiring a bourgeois revolution.[3] The Indian situation presents a situation similar to that of Russia before the October revolution. It presented the possibilities of bourgeois peasant revolution for sweeping away the dominant feudal elements in the first step and proletarian revolution in the next. Explaining the essence of the agrarian problem in Russia, Lenin wrote in 1912 :

> "Undoubtedly a system of agriculture just as capitalist has already become firmly established and is steadily developing in Russia. It is in this direction that both landlord and peasant farming is developing. But purely capitalist relations in our country are still overshadowed to a tremendous extent by feudal relations. The distanctive character of the Russian agrarian problem lies in the struggle which the mass of

> the population, above all the peasantry as a whole, are waging against these relations. In the West this kind of problem existed everywhere in olden days, but it was solved there long ago. In Russia its solution has been delayed - the problem was not solved by the agrarian Reform of 1861 nor can it be solved under present conditions by the Stolypin agrarian policy".[4]

While analysing the agricultural situation in Russia Lenin explained that the transformation of the feudal mode and relations of productions could take place in two ways. While the pivot of struggle on the land front was the feudal LATIFUNDIA,[5] the most conscpicuous embodiment of the survival of serfdom in Russia, the development of commodity production and capitalism would certainly and inevitably put an end to those survivals. In that respect Russia had only one path before her - that of bourgeois development.

> "But there may be two forms of that development the survivals of serfdom may fall away either as a result of the transformation of landlord economy as a result of the abolition of the landlord LATIFUNDIA i.e. either by reform or by revolution. Bourgeois development may proceed by having big landlord economies at the head, which will gradually become more and more bourgeois and gradually substitute bourgeois for feudal methods of exploitation. It may also proceed by having small peasant economies at the head, which in a revolutionary way, will remove the excrescene of the feudal LATIFUNDIA from the social organism and freely develop without them along the path of capitalist economy".(Lenin 1977a :25)

These two paths of possible bourgeois development were identified by Lenin as the Russian and American types.

Lenin thereby indicated his preference for a particular evolution of the agrarian structure in terms of its potentiality to allow rapid development of forces of production which are of cardinal importance for sharpening contradictions in the relations of production and polarization of classes. The slow and painful development of forces of production associated with bourgeois development of the landlord type (as distinguished from the peasant type) blunts, rather than sharpening the contradiction in the process of evolution of the agrarian structure. Bourgeois evolution of the peasant type will not only be conducive to the rapid development of new forces of production and sharpening of the class contradictions but also to the creation of objective conditions for the advancement of class struggle. However, Lenin speaks of the limitations of such development. He writes :

> "....the essence of revolution now in progress amounts to the break-up of feudal latifundia and to the creation of a free and (as far as this is possible under present circumstances) well-to-do peasantry capably not only of toiling in misery on the land, but of developing the productive forces and promoting progress of agriculture. This revolution doesn't and cannot in any way affect the system of small production in agriculture, the domination of the market over the producer, and consequently the domination also of commodity production, since the struggle for the redistribution of the land cannot alter the relations of production in the farming of this land. And we have seen that a feature of this struggle is the strong development of small-scale farming on the fedual latifundia" (Lenin, 1977a : 20-21).

The bourgeois government of India has adopted Lenin's first path for the transformation of the agrarian structure in India : viz. creation of an agrarian economy in which

bourgeois agrarian relations of the first type would be dominant. The conversion of feudal landed states into large farms, emergence of rich peasantry on the one hand and disintegration of the small peasantry on the other, forcible eviction of tenants and proletarianisation of the direct producers of various kinds in the process of land reforms go to confirm this interpretation of the process of agrarian change in India under the aegis of the Congress Party. Nagi Reddy, the former leader of UCCRI (ML), writes :

> "The big bourgeois landlord government in India has taken to the path of a gradual transformation of landlord latifundia into bourgeois economy, with all its, plans for the supply of better seeds, fertilizers, use of pesticides, mechanisation of agriculture, extensive funelling of state loans into the landlord economy with the help of immense aid from international finance and Soviet revisionism (N. Reddy 1976 : 292)

The question of the mode of production especially in agriculture, however, has been the subject of a major debate among Marxist scholars in recent years in India. The debate has been ably summarised by Alice Thorner in a recent paper.

The main issues involved in the debate according to Thorner are :

1) Is there capitalism in Indian agriculture? If yes, then to what extent and in which areas? Is it a recent phenomenon? Is it spreading? More than anything else is it a guarantee of agricultural progress?

2) If the dominant mode of production in agriculture is not capitalist but pre-capitalist or semi-feudal then what are the characteristic features

of semi-feudal agriculture? To what extent are they a brake on agricultural progress?

3) Can India be characterised with one or another or Marx's well known modes of production : slavery, feudalism, capitalism and the Asiatic mode ? Is it necessary to modify one of Marx's original concepts or to bring in a new mode (or modes) to account for Indian or more largely colonial specificity? Can there be more than one mode of production in the same country at the same time? In that case are they necessarily in conflict or may they be articulated in some fashion?

4) What are the principal rural classes and their respective shares of the rural population? What are the main lines of conflict and what are the actual contradictions in rural India as a whole? What is the role of government in reconciling or sharpening these conflicts?

5) What implications do the results of the above debate have for the political action by the left parties? (Alice Thorner, 1982 ; 1961-62).

In continuation of the issues, which she identified in the debate, one more dimension could be added keeping the purpose of this study in view : What is the kind of role the left parties play while in power in regard to the relations of production in agriculture and sharpening class contradiction. When Thorner speaks of the role of governmental intervention, a distinction must be made between the role of the governments which implement land reforms effectively and those which have a lukewarm attitude towards them. I think the debate is relevant to the extent it can suggest some clear cut line of action for the objectives of the left parties for the completion of bourgeois democratic tasks on the agrarian front by

abolition of landlordism, elimination of the dominance of imperialism and continuing class struggle against capitalism in agriculture in defence of the mass of the peasantry and agricultural labourers.

1. Conception Definition and Extent of Capitalism in Agriculture

Among the early researchers who published their findings on agriculture in India were Sulekh Chandra Gupta, Kotovysky and Daniel Thorner. They felt that capitalist relations in agriculture were [illegible] leading, though not dominant. Thorner wrote in 1960 :

> "Before 1960s there used to be in India only a few pockets of capitalistic agriculture - parts of Punjab and Western U.P., Central Gujarat, Coimbatore, and Coastal Andhra. Now for the first time there has come into being in all parts of the countryside in India, a layer, thick in some regions, thinner in others, of agricultural capitalists...."

In the next wave of studies the focuss was on the criteria by which capitalist farmers could be identified. According to Rudra the criteria that distinguish capitalist farmers from merely big farmers are :

a) Tendency to cultivate one's land on his own rather than to lease out.

b) Tendency to use hired labour in a much greater proportion than family labour.

c) Tendency to use farm machinery.

d) Producing enough marketable surplus.

e) Organisation of production so as to yield a high rate of return on his investments.

Based on his field work Rudra concluded that there was no such clear cut trend as the emergence of capitalist farmers.

Criticising Rudra for his unhistorical and statistical argument Utsa Patnaik says that historically the capitalist farmer is a former landlord or a rich peasant who emerges from within the pre-existing non-capitalist economic structure. Ex-colonial countries like India are charaterised precisely by a limited and distorted development of capitalism which does not revolutionise agriculture. For her neither employment of hired labourers from outside the family nor production for the market are the main criteria for identification of capitalist farmers. These are necessary conditions but not sufficient conditions. Because a large number of agricultural labourers arose as a result of proletarianisation of the poorer majority of the peasantry under the impact of imperialism, employment of these labourers was simply a contingent factor. Elaborating Patnaik's position Alice Thorner writes :

> "The characteristic of the geniune capitalist, Patnaik proposes, is not merely appropriation of surplus value generated by wage labour nor the sale on the market of a high proportion of produce but, and indispensably, accumulation and reinvestment of surplus value in order to generate more surplus on an ever-expanding scale. The capitalist agriculture can be recognised by the degree of capital intensification i.e. growth of outlay on both constant and variable capital with respect to a given land area and, over time, a tendency towards a higher than average organic composition of capital leading to higher productivity of land and labour. (1982 :p. 1964)

Patnaik opposes the arguments of people like who argue that for capitalism to be identified it is not necessary to specify separately accumulation and reinvestment of surplus value since they already fall within Lenin's definition of capitalism as the highest stage of commodity production in which labour power itself is a commodity. Chattopadhyaya's definition of capitalism as generalised commodity production would draw him closer to Andre Gunder Frank who has taken an extreme position which, however, she assumes Chattopadhyaya is not in agreement with. The position of Frank is :

> "...all countries dominated by imperialism entered the network of world capitalist exchange relationship (and also thereby experienced generalised commodity production to a greater or lesser degree). Therefore, all these are capitalist. Therefore, the only possible immediate programme of a revolutionary political party in each of these countries must be socialist revolution. I believe the fallacy in this chain of reasoning lies at the starting point, in the failure to distinguish between capital in the sphere of exchange and capital in the sphere of production. ...I am sure PC will not choose to draw the extreme conclusion which Gunder Frank has done: but his theoretical premise does seem to be quite close to Frank (Ibid : 9 : 1965).

However, Frank has replied to Patnaik by saying that Patnaik is wrong in defining capitalism so narrowly as to require that profits in agriculture are reinvested on the very spot where it is produced i.e. in agriculture itself or in agriculture in the same geographical area. According to him :

> "UP looks for the criterion of the mode of production on the individual farm ... No wonder ifthe UP method is to 'extend' the criterion of extended reproduction, accumulation and investment of them in each of the impoverished farms of India that she is hard put to recognise the capitalist mode of production when she sees it".

The political implications of Patnaik's argument only put off the struggle for socialist revolution. Frank questions :

> "Well what conclusion will UP choose to draw from her other extreme method? That socialist revolution will not become the programmatic order of the day until capitalism by her criterion - reinvestment of surplus value produced by farm labourer on the same farm itself has penetrated each and every one of her individual farms" (Ibid : 1966).

2. Semi-feudalism, the dominant mode

According to another major trend in the debate semi-feudal relations of production are dominant in Indian agriculture. The main contenders in this argument are : Amit Bhaduri, Pradhan H. Prasad, Nirmal Chandra, Ranjit Sau and also Ashok Rudra.

Listing four prominent features of semi-feudal relations, viz., sharecropping; perpetual indebtedness of the small tenants, concentration of the two modes of exploitation i.e. usury and ownership of land, in the hands of the same economic class, and lack of accessibility to markets for the small tenant, Bhaduri asserted that these elements obtaining in agriculture in West Bengal are more in common

with the classical feudalism of master-serf type than with industrial capitalism. Bhaduri envisaged four possible developments in future :

1. Low Productivity and stagnation in agriculture will continue to maintain the existing power structure at the village level in East India.

2. Semi-feudal production relations will be modified to accommodate profitable use of improved technology

3. & 4. It is also possible that semi-feudal production relations will gradually give way to capitalistic production relations based on wage labour or will be simply overthrown by the desperate poor unless a radical land reform is carried out (Ibid : 1966)

The findings of Pradhan H. Prasad based on his study of 200 households in the districts of purnea, Saharsa and Monghyr in Bihar in 1970 and 1972 have been summarised by Alice Thorner Succintly as follows :

> "In these villages utilisation of available irrigation facilities declines with increase in the size of holdings, larger landowners (10 acres and above) who cultivate with hired labourers, prefer attached workers, indebtedness is widespread, sharecropping is a common feature, and daily wages are so low that even households with two workers employed throughout the year are forced to take consumption loans at exhorbitant rates of interest. These debts run on indefinitely since the creditors do not expect ever to get the stipulated interest and principal from such rural poor. Usury is practiced mainly to perpetuate the indissoluble bond between the direct producer and his overlord..." (Ibid.)

Prasad further argues that semi-feudalism is a characteristic of agriculture throughout the country.

Nirmal Chandra and Ranjit Sau also subscribed to this view. Nirmal Chandra conducted his study on 250 farms in five districts of West Bengal and added two points to the argument made by Bhaduri :

1. The effect of semi-feudal relations on productive forces need not be so fatal as Bhaduri argued.

2. The massive unemployment in the rural areas, of course stabilizes semi-feudalism.

Based on his inquiry in Eastern India Ashok Rudra has contested the formulations of Amit Bhaduri, Nirmal Chandra and Pradhan H. Prasad. In Alice Thorner's words:

> "Nowhere in these districts, Rudra reports, has he encountered the landowners whom Prasad and Nirmal Chandra describe as a class that finds it more in its economic and social power interests to resort to usury rather than to capital investment. On the contrary he has found in many parts of the state landowners who are very much engaged in capital investments in the form of irrigation, fertilizers and Highyeilding Variety Seeds. This is equally true of landowners who give their land out on lease to sharecroppers and those who cultivate it themselves with the help of hired labour. The practice has become almost universal in West Bengal, Rudra discovered, of owners paying for the irrigation and advancing the share of costs of seed and fertilizers. These advances are repaid by the tenant in terms of crops at the time of the harvest. No interest is charged". (Ibid : p. 1968).

Usury exists but it does not appear to Rudra that the landowning class in West Bengal is dependent on usury. Conditions of labourers or tenants being bound by debt and other obligations to a particular landowner because of shortage

of labour in peak seasons exists both in tenant farmed lands and in hired labour farmed lands. On the whole the arguments of Rudra are in favour of the existence of capitalist rather than semi-feudal relations.

3. Identification of Class Contradiction and Course of Political Action

Turning next to the debate on rural class structure and class contradictions, Alice Thorner reviews the arguments of Joan Mencher, Nirmal Chandra, Utsa Patnaik, Ashok Rudra Pranab Bardan, Pradhan H. Prasad and John Harris.

Joan Mencher (1974) studied the development of agricultural labourers organisations and peasant associations in Thanjavur and Chingleput in Tamil Nadu and Kuttanad in Kerala. Her interest was mainly to find out why agrarian conflicts have taken place on a sustained basis in some areas and not in others.

In Mencher's opinion agrarian conflicts in India have been persistent in areas where there are a large number of agricultural labourers even though peasant organisations are not strong. As against Eric Wolf's hypothesis that it is the middle peasants who constitute the leading group in peasant uprisings, she observes that it has been the landless labourers without any ties with landowners who have been the main organisers of agitations. In Chingleput, although there

are a large number of agricultural labourers in any given year, only a handful of them may become sharecroppers. Competition among agricultural labourers and poor peasants for getting land on cropshare inhibits organisational unity among them so much so that they not only cannot fight for their customary tenancy rights but also become vulnerable to the manoeuvres of the landowners to keep them divided and leaderless.

Mencher also pointsout that caste allegiances by people in the system, as well as by outside observers, mask class differences. Well-to-do members of middle ranking castes may give land preferentially to their castemates who identify themselves with the big landowners rather than with their co-workers.

Mencher's observation is suggestive of the social factor which works to the advantage of the rich and blurs class loyality and class organisations. (Alive Thorner 1982 : 1984). I would say that this is quite understandable to Indian scholars, although a bit novel to the foreigners. Even, for instance, in areas like Kuttanadu where agricultural workers are highly organised, the Christian landowners prefer to employ agricultural labourers from amongst Scheduled Castes as they belong to the Hindu religion. It could be possible that in Malabar region Muslims may be doing the same thing.

I think the socio-cultural factors which work as psychological pulls against the poor peasants and agricultural labourers in organising across caste, sub-caste religious and sect lines - very persistent in Kerala - have to be examined to find out to what extent they work against class-based electoral mobilisation by the left parties. This I will deal elsewhere to find out what efforts the left parties have made to overcome such problems.

Nirmal Chandra deliberates on the nature of the rural classes in West Bengal with special reference to Burdwan district in terms of income from various sources. He also considers the implications this pattern has for class-based political action. According to him upper classes are those families who depend upon their rental income. These classes are : landlords who depend upon rental income, rich peasants who are dependent on non-family labour and middle peasants who cultivate with the help of marginal non-family labour along with theirs. Based on the source of income he devides the villages into two class configurations : one taking into account only agricultural income and the other taking into account all other sources of income including agriculture. This criterion leads Chandra to find two classes which are more or less equal in number : those who get unearned income - all who lease out land or hire in workers - on the one hand, and the poor peasants and agricultural labourers on the other. Given this quasi-equality a struggle launched

by the exploited half against the exploiting half would never get off the ground.

An alternative and more useful approach according to Chandra could be one that was followed in the crucial peasant struggles in the past in Bengal - one in undivided Bengal that took place during 1946-47 for tenancy reforms and the other during 1967-70 for identification, recovery and redistribution of surplus land. In both the cases the concentration was on the elimination of "one particular feudal remnant". But here also there were difficulties. In both the cases the exploiters were men with very small means who had some close friends and relatives among middle and poor peasants which enabled the upper classes to create divisions among the militant organisers and defeat the movements. Commenting on the approach of Nirmal Chandra, Alice Thorner remarks :

> "Nirmal Chandra instead proposes a two stage approach with left-wing political hegemony as the first goal. Once this has been achieved, the main task becomes the elimination of all forms of exploitation. He forsees the possibility of a number of sub-stages in the course of the movement 'when the lines between the friendly and hostile elements may have to be redrawn" (Ibid : p. 1994).

Utsa Patnaik like Nirmal Chandra distinguishes between the exploiting classes-landlords and rich peasants - and the exploited - poor peasants and labourers. Within

each of these categories she specifies two different strata based on the dominant mode of exploitation, whether in the form of rent or wages. The distinctions among the four main classes are the same as those focussed in the Marxist classes. "Thus in the case of big landowners, whether feudal or capitalist, family members don't perform manual labour in major farm operations. Supervision or operating of machinery, Patnaik specifies, is not considered manual labour. Rich peasants do participate in manual work; however their resource position is such that appropriation of others' labour is as important as use of family labour. The middle peasant is primarily self-employed since on the average the resources per capita just suffice to employ adequately the supply of family labour and to provide living at a customary substance level. The poor peasant family must hire out its members for wages or lease in land no matter how high the rent, or combines these two expedients". The poor peasants and full time labourers cannot make both ends meet. Although fulltime agricutlrual labourers lease out some strips of land which they don't cultivate, yet the labour equivalent of the rent received is not such that it will outweigh the family labour hired out. The labour exploitation criterion is designed to bring out the necessity for the different classes to enter into relations in the process of production.

Thorner then presents Rudra's conception of classes which are defined by class contradictions. The relations between classes are relations of production, but Rudra goes on to qualify this statement by saying 'not all relations of production define classes'. They define various 'social groups', but 'only some social groups are classes'.

Ruling out the theoretical obligation to fit the whole of the agricultural population into one or another class category, Rudra argues that there exist in Indian agriculture today only two classes - a class of big landowners and a class of agricultural labourers. The latter includes, broadly, landless labourers, and poor tenants who do not hire any labourers. Rudra does not find any contradiction between capitalistic farmers and farmers with feudal features. According to him, "there may be coexistence of more or less feudal and more or less capitalist farmers in the same region, or in the same village, or even in the same family. There may in fact be co-existence of some traits typical of feudal landowners in the same farmer". Because of the caste factor in India, Rudra also rejects the classical distinction between landlords and rich peasants, based on participation in manual work. Upper castes in most of the cases do not take to the plough even if they have very small holdings. On the other hand, in mechanised agriculture ...

in Punjab even women participate in agriculture. The class of big landowners which is referred to as the ruling class in India, is a hybrid class - part feudal and part capitalist.

Rudra argues that apart from the big landowners and agricultural labourers, the rest of the population is classless. "This classlessness results from the fact that while they have contradiction among themselves, they do not have clear contradictions with the two principal classes. Or such contradictions are of subsidiary nature". Only the struggle between the two main classes can provide the motive force for any changes in the agrarian structure.

Rudra spells out the political implications of his analysis of classes in Indian agriculture. As there is no contradiction between landlords and capitalist farmers, there is no justification in programmes "to support the assumed capitalist forces against the assumed feudal forces in an assumed struggle between the two". He firmly rejects the concept of alliance of the entire peasantry, from the landless labourers to the capitalist farmers, against the feudal landlords. This political line only betrays the interests of peasantry not belonging to the ruling class and the agricultural labourers. The main weakness of the earlier peasant movements has been that they have

been led by rich peasantry who benefited from the movement.

Rudra's suggestions go much against the political line adopted by the left parties - CPI, CPI(M) and to some extent even the CPI(ML). Left parties, particularly the CPI and CPI(M), have been relying on middle and rich peasants in the name of struggle against feudalism and imperialism in the bourgeois democratic stage of revolution. Their real intention, in line with the classical Marxist position, is to win over the middle and rich peasants to the side of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers in their struggle against the landlords. But, it appears to me, that because of various problems, organisational or otherwise, it is the middle and rich peasants, although numerically small, who become the leading force and agricultural labourers and poor peasants lag behind in spite of their large numbers. It is worthwhile to examine, for the purpose of the present study, to what extent electoral mobilisation which requires various traits in the leaders and persons who can mobilise funds, results in the ascendency of the middle and rich peasantry. Here elections and electoral alliances and even the formation of United Front Governments seem to obstruct the emergence of genuine leadership of the agricutlural workers and the poor peasantry. This was a problem during the period of the

national movement as well. However, during the national movement the rich and middle peasantry were also on the defensive as against big and semi-feudal landlords. After independence, it seems the persisting dominance of the rich and middle peasantry is due to electoral and parliamentary exigencies rather than the fact that these sections of the peasantry are sufferers in the present system as argued by the left parties.

In regard to the patterns of struggle relevant to the social and cultural ethos of India. Rudra has some well conceived propositions. His rejection, of the use of the term feudalism while analysing Indian history is the key to the propositions he makes. He points out that for him, the political economists who use the term semi-feudal presumably believe that the mode of production in India during some previous period was feudal, much in line with the pattern that evolved in Europe. Those who use this term are unconcerned with the socio-cultural specificities in India which cannot be termed feudal.

> "Whereas the European genius forged the features and rituals of feudalism (such as commendation, homage and fealty) the Indian genius invented the caste system, the Hindu ethos. He advances the hypothesis that whereas in the Western world, hierarchic structure of society is maintained, in the ultimate analysis by violence, this particular role in Indian history was played not by violence but by ideology" (Alice Thorner 1982 : p. 2062)

Based on the above understanding Rudra Suggests that the patterns of struggle to be waged by the oppressed classes should be struggles against Brahminic ideology. I would say that this sounds quite right. However, both on scientific analytical plane and in the field of political practice and strategies of mobilisation of the oppressed classes an in-depth understanding of the socio-cultural ethos of the country has been lacking. Both, the majority of leaders and cadres of left parties understand the problematic of struggles and movements in terms of sterile economism or politicisation in the bourgeois democratic sense of the term, which is again alien to the Indian ethos. Both the categories of practitioners suffer from double loyality : to the left ideology conforming to the street, factory, trade union, party office conference and public meeting on the one hand and loyality to caste, religion and other customary aspects on the other. Because of this in-built contradiction, movements scarcely forge ahead or penetrate into the workers and peasants' homes. As a result an effort to build a communist ideological/cultural hegemony to counter the reactionary cultural/ideological hegemony, to put it in Gramsci's words, has not been built. I venture to say that Rudra's proposition has to be understand in this sense.

Alice Thorner rightly compares the line suggested by Rudra and that which has been adopted by the leftwing

Maharastrian organisation Atyachar Virodh Samiti, which submitted a report on the Maharastra riots. The report revealed that it is the caste Hindus who perpetrated violence on Scheduled Castes.

> "The Samiti contends that caste heirarchies reflect economic power and ownership of land... It is at this point that caste riots, reflecting conflict of class interests take place. In the mixed capitalist economy of today caste persists as a part of feudal ideology.... To establish a link between fights against caste oppression and class exploitation... is the need of the hour" (Alice Thorner, 1982 ; 2063).

Nirmal Sen Gupta stresses the continued determining role of imperialism even in post-independence India in terms of the continuance of Indian economy as an integral part of the world capitalist system. "This is a capitalist trend which manifests itself in a colonial or semi-colonial society where the feudal mode of production and feudal social formation survive in an assimilative form, running over a variety of proportionality between feudal mode and capitalist mode". The agrarian formation which was colonial and semi-feudal in the colonial period can be labelled semi-colonial, and semi-feudal in the post-independence period according to him. "Though capitalism has come, pre-capitalist mode is still prevalent, and capitalist development is arrested primarily by the influence of imperialism", Sen Gupta concludes. The task immediately ahead, he urges, is

fundamentally one of full-scale capitalist development. (Alice Thorner, 1982 : p. 2061-62.)

Another point of view is that of Sharat G. Lin, who agrees with the superimposed dual mode of production proposed by Banaji and Sen Gupta. Lin's opinion is that "the two primary modes (pre-capitalist and capitalist) interpenetrate generating a single mode with dual character having at once, both accommodating and conflicting internal dynamics". State power is shared by two historically opposed ruling classes since it is based on two historically opposed primary modes. Hence, it cannot remain for ever stable. Yet, Lin opines, it may last longer than has been the case elsewhere in the world. This is because of the well-entrenched nature of the pre-capitalist mode, wide regional variation in the strength of capitalist forces, the social inertia of sheer size, and the role of cultural factors.

Lin suggests the course of political action for left parties. The oppressed classes, the proletariat and the impoverished peasantry must struggle against whichever of the two modes and elements of state power is confronted.

> "The enemy must be carefully chosen since a struggle against the feudal aspect which doesn't take into account the bourgeois aspect will lead by default to strengthening the position of the latter and to the type of class collaboration exercised by various left parties. However, it is not yet the movement

> for a stage of struggle for the socialist revolution since the Indian bourgeoisie has not completed and cannot complete the bourgeois democratic revolution. This can be completed only by an alliance of workers and peasants who constitute nearly 90 per cent of the population" (Alice Thorner, 1982 : p. 2062).

Gail Omvedt argues in favour of the existence of capitalist relations as the dominant mode. Her argument is based on the following observations : there are vast number of agricultural wage earners; production and returns are subject to the market; the means of production in agriculture are now produced industrially and are acquired through the market; constant increase in the use of capital inputs; growth in agricultural production though increasing mobility of the rural proletariat some of whom are migrating etc. The implication she draws from this is that the rural proletariat today is embedded with revolutionary potential. Along with the poor and middle peasants and other oppressed classes they should be united against the rich and capitalist farmers. This obviously is a rejection of the tactics of the major left and parliamentary parties which are increasingly aligning with the rich.

In conclusion Alice Thorner says that most of the analyses and political prescriptions smack of the armchair and the scholar's candle. Although they are scientific theoretical discussions they need to be combined with the reflections of actual practioners. However, this has some-

thing to do with how one conceives political practice. In my view political practice is more a matter of involvement or commitment which may include studying the problem concerned with scientific curiosity.

In the light of the above discussion on the evolution of Indian agrarian structure the controversy regarding the mode and relations of production in Indian agriculture may be resolved to a great extent. What comes out of it is that the agrarian structure, set for bourgeois development, is still dominated by remnants of the feudal mode and relations of production with the capitalistic mode and relations evolving very slowly and painfully. Thus the evolving Indian agrarian relations are twice removed from the second type of bourgeois productive forces which Lenin referred to and which I discussed above that is, the peasant bourgeois forces of production which is conducive to rapid development of agriculture. However, this argument is subject to regional and geographical variations in addition to variations that have been affected by relatively effective implementation of land reforms in states like Kerala and by the programme of Green Revolution. Of course these variations are small given the vastness of the country and areas unaffected by land reforms and state intervention for institutional change and areas which are still dominated by feudalism. Yet, the thrust of the argument does not change.

P.C. Joshi suggests in fact a via media. First of all, he is critical of the use of a single frame of reference for the study of the agrarian structure for the country as a whole. He writes :

> "the adoption of such a procedure has blurred the perception of certain fundamental differences characterising the agrarian social structure in different regions of India. It is, therefore, necessary to emphasise that the understanding of the agrarian relations is bound to gain in depth if the agrarian social structure is viewed as a sum-total of regional structures" (P.C. Joshi, 1975 : 203).[6]

This is what Alice Thorner also expressed in an earlier article in 1980 where she wrote :

> "I am for solid, fresh, creative analytical work tied tightly to solid field work in villages by the analysts themselves - going further, I must confess that I became more and more wary of all-India generalisations. Only after we come to know better the regional variations can we build up a more satisfactory all-India picture" (Harris, 1980: 82).

The foregoing analysis of the mode of production debate in Indian agriculture has been made to serve as a backdrop for considering the views of the left parties on this issue. However, I will focus mainly on the theory and practice of the CPI and CPI(M) keeping in view of the purpose of the study. Left parties other than the CPI and CPI(M) have broadly subscribed to the view that agrarian relations in India are semi-feudal operating in the overall

economy dominated by the neo-colonial interests in the form of trade, aid and foreign capital. The bureaucratic comprador state, according to thm, is serving on the whole, the above interests. The basic strategy is to fight out semi-feudalism and neo-colonialism with agrarian armed struggle as the axis with the alliance of agricultural labourers, poor peasants, middle peasants and to some extent rich peasants in the bourgeois stage of revolution. However, there are several differences in regard to strategy and tactics in spite of the broad understanding among these parties, which includes mainly the linking of agrarian politics and land reforms to the questions of capturing state power and dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (Gough and Sharma 1973 ; N. Reddy, 1978).

POLITICS OF LAND REFORMS : CPI AND CPI(M)

In the programmes of the undivided CPI and later the CPI and CPI(M) the theory and practice on the agrarian front assume central a role in the realisation of ultimate goals in general and the immediate goals in particular. In the present stage of revolution and in the context of historical and political developments in the country after independence the communist parties do not have any basic differences,

particularly at the theoretical level, with the land reforms programme and strategy of agrarian change within a bourgeois framework adopted under the aegis of the Congress Party. The basic differences center around the implementation of the programme and its prerequisites. However, given the Marxist understanding that the bourgeoisie will not take radical initiatives in the completion of the bourgeois democratic tasks the communists have never developed any illusions about the fulfilment of the promises made by the Congress and Janata governments on the agrarian front. It has not been surprising to the communists that whatever radical fervour that may have been present in the Congress Party during the national movement and to some extent in its agrarian programmes has steadily dwindled since independence. The immediate goals of the communist parties are aimed at only complementing the agrarian programme of the bourgeoisie in terms of filling the gaps in the policies, amending the laws, providing an alternative administrative ethos, checking the manoeuvres of the vested interests and, more importantly, formulating alternative strategies of mobilization of the intended beneficiaries for their effective participation at all levels of the process. The Congress programme on the whole has to be worked out to its exhaustion.

The programmes of the communist parties do not differ

much from each other in respect of the agrarian situation and changes that have taken place since independence. Both the parties have stakes in the Congress land reform programme and more or less the same attitude towards its performance. In terms of strategies and tactical slogans in relation to immediate goals also little difference can be seen (Harris, 1982).

The programme of the CPI states :

> "The national bourgeoisie, having secured state power, set it self the task of putting the country on the path of independent capitalist development.....
>
> The main aim of Congress agrarian legislation has been to replace semi-feudal relations and forms of production in agriculture by capitalist relations and capitalist forms of production.....
>
> The Congress governments have substantially curbed feudal vested interests through various legislative measures..... The enactment of these antifeudal measures has gone hand in hand with conscious efforts to develop and foster a class of rich peasants and capitalist landlords who could become the backbone of the new capitalist agrarian set-up .....(which) with state aid could expand production..... But it is important to note that the ruling national bourgeoisie, being itself an exploiting class did not pursue these aims..... No wonder that in totality the gains of agrarian legislation under Congress rule have been partial and limited, being confined mainly to the upper strata of the rural population, while a large section of the toiling peasantry still lives in conditions of gross poverty and subject to multifarious forms of semi-feudal exploitation". (CPI 1968 : 22-23).

The programme points to the existence of feudal remnants' even after the proprietory rights of the semi-feudal intermediaries over ten million acres of cultivated land

under peasant occupation and over large areas of forest, pasture and wastelands have been abolished. Although the position of those who got occupancy rights has undoubtedly changed, semi-feudal forms of exploitation such as sub-letting or leasing out at exorbitant rents, usury, and sharecropping, leading to impoverishment of the vast population remain. Concentration of land ownership did not decline even after land reforms. As the CPI pointed out :

> ".....in the country as a whole 2.43 per cent of rural households, each owning more than 30 acres hold between them 28.5 per cent of the total land, whereas at the other end 82.5 per cent own between them only 27.43 per cent of the total land". (CPI, 1968 : 26).

On the one hand the economy of the bulk of the self-cultivating peasantry has not improved on account of the continuation of the semi-feudal burdens and exploitation of the producers through the market by traders and on the other, capitalist relations of production have made significant inroads into the agrarian set-up and the dominant mode of production is now capitalist. (CPI 1968 : 28)

Pointing to the crisis on the agrarian front the programme stated :

> "Survival of semi-feudal modes of exploitation combined with the growth of commercialisation of agriculture have produced a new set of reactionery vested interests. Landlords, usurers and wholesale dealers, often combined in the same person, constitute the modern parasites holding up the progress of agriculture and supporting right reaction .

> .....The price mechanism and market manipulations deprive the peasants of whatever little benefits they secure on account of land reforms and technological development. The peasant is fleeced by commodity capital both as a producer and as consumer" (Ibid : 28-29).

The programme, as explained elsewhere, identified monopoly capital as the enemy both on agrarian and industrial fronts. In this regard the rich peasants are also being exploited and the CPI sides with them on the price question. The stand of the party in regard to rich peasants who produce cash crops is that the producers of cash crops which are exported are often ruined on account of sharp and sudden fall in prices, due to price manipulations by monopoly interests in the capitalist market. Hence the question of remunerative and stable prices of agricultural products has great importance for these sections.[7]

The solution, the programme states lies in a "radical agrarian reform and a conscious movement to increase productivity in agriculture.

Projecting the non-capitalist path of development which the party adopted the programmes states that this path will, through far-reaching reforms, unshackle the productive forces in industry and agriculture, ensure rapid economic growth and rising living standards of the people. The government of national democracy embodied in the national

democratic front will direct the economy on such lines that the growth of capitalism in industry and agriculture is restricted and the country is put on the road to socialism. (CPI, 1968)

The national democratic front which will be instrumental in the programme will consist of patriotic forces of the country viz. the working class, the entire peasantry, including the rich peasants and agricultural labourers, the intelligentsia and the monopolistic bourgeoisie. The worker-peasant alliance will be the basis and pivot of the front (CPI, 1968 : 44-45).

As reflected in the documents of the front organisations like All India Kisan Sabha, and booklets written by individual ideologues the path of CPI in subsequent years has not changed.

The stand of the CPI, however, has not been free of criticism and accusations. One such accusation is that it is joining hands with Kulaks and other exploiters in rural areas for some electoral crumbs. Another accusation is that this practice is opportunism. In reply to the critics and accusen Indradeep Sinha quotes Ajay Ghosh an important leader of the undivided CPI :

> ".....The national bourgeoisie which opposes imperialism and feudalism in so far as they obstruct its own growth, also tends to compromise with them in order to combat the mass movement. Above all the bourgeoisie seeks to develop the country along capitalist path which tends to strengthen trends towards monopoly. The monopolies seek not merely collaboration with foreign capital, but also display, as we have seen, profoundly reactionary tendencies" (Ghosh, 1962 : 293).

Sinha emphasises that what Ghosh said above has not lost validity even after two decades. The task is still the liquidation of the imperialist, feudal and monopoly exploitation by way of building a united front of "the working class, the peasantry, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie prepared to join against imperialism". (Sinha, 1982 : 16-17).

Monopolists and multinationals are the links and the embodiments of imperialism which works through the international market and through which the burden of unequal commodity exchange in the international capitalist market is passed on to the Indian peasantry. This burden increases as the crisis in world capitalist sharpens. Sinha mentions two important aspects of this crisis that have a profound impact on the Indian economy on the one hand and the peasantry on the other. They are the rapid deterioration in the terms of trade between India and the

imperialist countries and the still more rapid deterioration in the intersectoral terms of trade between agriculture and the other sectors of the Indian economy.

Sinha is critical of I.G. Patel the Governer of the Reserve Bank of India, who according to him gave a pro-capitalist solution to the country's agrarian problems : "Beyond a point, small farming is not viable. If so, the remedy lies not in providing credit to such small farmers but in providing them with alternative gainful work". This means that the bourgeosie lets the small farmers to become agricultural labourers and tries only to provide alternative gainful work. It leads the small peasant farming to ruin and consolidates capitalist agriculture on its debris (Ibid, 70-71).

Communists oppose this policy of welcoming the ruin of non-viable small peasants, opposing subsidies and reliefs to him and counselling the ruined peasants and agricultural workers to wait until capitalist agriculture bears fruits to "trickle down" to them. Hence, they demand defence of the small peasants, liquidation of semifeudal and semicapitalist landlordism, distribution of land among the tillers, and gradual transition to socialist agriculture based on voluntary co-operatives of equal producers (Ibid : 72).

"Land to the tiller, fair wage to the agricultural workers remunerative price to the pesant and cheap food to the people are the main slogans around which the party adopts the non-capitalist path and opposes the capitalist path. It relies firmly on agricultural labourers and poor peasants, unites solidly with small and middle peasants and tries to win the rich peasants in order to isolate and defeat the landlords, the usurers, the monopolists and the multi-nationals in alliance with the industrial working class and other democratic classes" (Ibid : 72).

The stand of the CPI(M) regarding the task on the agrarian front has been presented in its Central Committee Resolutions of 1967, 1973 and 1978. These years are crucial. In 1967 the CPI(M) emerged as a political force after the split in 1964 and in this resolution the top leadership of the party clarified its position. In 1973 the party reviewed the experiences of the United Front Governments in Kerala and West Bengal and in 1978 the party had emerged as a victorious force in West Bengal in the post-emergency elections.

These resolutions focus mainly on the weaknesses of the movement of peasants and agricultural labourers. These weaknesses were discussed first in the Amritsar Party Congress in 1953. The rightist tendency in the movement and reformist

analysis of the agrarian classes and tasks on the agrarian front and not recognising the capitalist landlords as the enemies of the poor and middle peasantry were the main points of criticism that figured in the Amritsar Congress.

The CPI(M) is critical of the CPI's understanding of the Congress agrarian policy and performance. The main points of criticism of the CPI are two. Firstly, the CPI has withdrawn it's own earlier stand that the ruling classes in India are the capitalists and the landlords. Secondly, the CPI argues that the Congress governments should be supported in going ahead with land reforms programmes. The CPI(M) does not agree with both these positions and also accuses some of the right communist analysts for arguing that land reforms have been implemented fully and there is not much revolutionary potential left in the issue.

The programme of the CPI(M) adopted at the 7th Congress in 1964 states that ".....our peasantry is not an homogenous category (and) that capitalism has made decisive inroads into it and brought about definite classification among them". Further, it states that the agricultural labourers and poor peasants, who constitute 70 per cent of the rural households, are subject to the exploitation of the landlords and they will be the firm allies of the working class. The middle peasants are equally exploited by usurious capital and are dominated by the big landlords and

will be a faithful ally of peasants. As for the rich peasants it is not so clear because while they aspire to join the capitalist landlords, they also "come up often against the oppressive policies pursued by the bourgeois-landlord government. (By and large) they can also be brought into the democratic front based on the alliance of the working class, agricultural labourers and the poor peasantry and retaind as allies in the people's democratic revolution" (Harris, 1980 : 60-61).

Based on the Central Committee resolution of the CPI(M) in 1973 recently Krishnaji (1979) elaborated the CPI(M)'s programme and the problems therein on the agrarian front in which the agricultural labourers, poor, middle and rich peasants are pitted against the landlords of both capitalist and feudal kind. On the question of the redistribution of land the landlords of both the types constitute the target of attack which take the form of legislating ceiling laws and their effective implementation both while in power and in opposition under the auspices of the left parties. The ceiling fixed will not affect the rich peasants as a class, although some individual cases are no exception. What Krishnaji points out is that the task of drawing middle and rich peasants into struggles without sabotaging the interests of the poor peasants and agricultural labourers

constituting 70 per cent and the proletarian character of the communist movement is a difficult one, if the history of the communist movement is any evidence. The domination of the middle and rich peasants is deep-rooted in the organisations on the agrarian front at the levels of leadership and activists. Because of the class origin and social links of these classes the agrarian movement has acquired reformist orientation which presents the party as a whole from working for the agricultural labourers and poor peasants with zeal and committment defitting the spirit of communists. Crucial to the whole formulation of the strategy of the party is the contradiction wherein surplus land is to be acquired without touching the middle and rich peasants on the one hand and distributing land among the poor peasants and agricultural labourers to their satisfaction on the other. Krishnaji's analysis is more relevant to the situation in Kerala and West Bengal where the land that could be acquired in this way has been negligible.

In regard to the wage struggles also it is difficult to forge unity of the classes on which the CPI relies because the demand for higher wages may work against the middle and rich peasants. As a result this problem puts restraint on any radical initiative in regard to the wage question.

Krishnaji's contention in regard to the question of

that remunative price is a weak issue in satisfying all the classes in the alliance also sounds right. Analytically speaking the remunarative prices will behefit only the capitalist farmers. Although the party spokesman, Sundarayya tried to solve this problem by suggesting that the surplus marketable produce from the landlords and capitalist farmers could be procured by the government and be made available to the agricultural labourers and other sections of the population. However, the strategy of procurement has not worked well in the interests of the toiling poor.

If we see evidence from many studies pointing to the inability to procure all the marketable surplus from capitalist farmers and landlords because of the adverse electoral implications it has for both the rightist and left oriented governments, which I discussed elsewhere in the context of Kerala and West Bengal, remunerative price as an issue for forging multiclass unity in the interests of the communist movement is very weak. Hence writes Krishnaji :

> "It will suffice to note that in the present political and economic situation of the country there do not exist any means, political or otherwise, for curbing the ability of the big land owners to secure for their produce high prices independently of market forces; nor do means exist for effectively taxing the rich farmers for ensuring that the benefits of fair prices only to the poorer sections of the peasantry. The pursuit of the goal of unity through the demand for fair prices thus works against the interests of the toiling poor" (Krishnaji, 1979 : 519).

As pointed out earlier even the alliance with the rich peasantry has come under strohg criticism from the non-parliamentary left parties. Central to the various points of criticism, two deserve special mention. Firstly, it has been argued that although at the theoretical level a progressive or a revolutionary class is included in the alliance of classes on which the parliamentary left parties have relied, the real character of these presumed classes has been reactionary and counter revolutionary. In other words of the landlord class becomes a class of rich peasants; the class of rich peasants becomes middle peasants etc. Secondly, it has been said that even though the left parties have upheld the interests of the agricultural labourers, there are no separate front organisations for them. This class trails behind the peasant organs - the kisan sabhas dominated by the rich peasantry. Gail Omvedt (1982) has discussed the political implications this strategy has for the interests of the agricultural labourers.

I would say these criticisms are right. As a matter of fact even if in some regions there exist separate front organisations of left parties for agricultural labourers particularly in the case of CPI(M) they are not effective.

However, the party ideologues have defended their stand in support of the rich peasants, though some people at the top recognise this as an evil.[9] It appears that this has got something to do with parliamentary and electoral politics, so that even if the rich peasantry is considered as an enemy class, they would infiltrate the party. Because of electoral exigecies, compromises on this issue would tend to be made. However, every document of the party indicates the need to win over the rich peasantry to the side of the United Front "because they are also affected by the unequal terms of trade between agriculture and industry, and unfavourable trends in prices of farm products worry them always". This is very clear from the various resolutions of the Central Committee where prospects of peasant unity have been dealt with.

In its resolution of 1978 the party emphasised "the need for peasant unity, not the old unity based on middle and rich peasants, but the unity of the agricultural labourers, poor, middle and rich peasants". (CPI(M) : 1978 : 47).

It is clear from the programmes of the left parties that the essence of the tasks and objectives on the agrarian front is rapid growth of forces of production in agriculture, the fruits of which should accrue in the main to the peasantry and the agricultural labourers. Whereas the bourgeoisie parties aim at this goal even at the cost of the extinction

of the small and poor peasantry the left parties want a prosperous peasant economy. All other efforts are aimed at saving the small and middle peasants and also to protect the rich peasantry from the vagaries of the trends in the economy, due both to national and international monetary and market forces.

State intervention both in bringing about changes in the agrarian structure and in aiding and assisting them financially is very crucial to the party's programmes. The legislative, executive and judicial measures in this respect which are not so favourable towards the peasantry are to be amended, improved and thoroughly implemented to their logical end.

This necessiates the left parties to come to power without which effective state intervention is not possible and the promised changes and relief are not possible. Otherwise this will tell on the prospects of the left movement.

Thus it is clear that once the bourgeois parliamentary path is chosen, even for tactical purposes as the leaders of CPI(M) would have us believe, identification of electoral advances and coming to power in the states and at the centre, along with advancement of the left movement is imperative. However, if the necessity of coming to power and retaining it is accepted, then the left parties are likely to face

serious problems in pursuing it. Persistance of the gloomy picture of the left in the North, West and Central India, and many other parts, points to the contradictions embedded in the above theoretical construct.

Another theoretical dilemma is the problem of the advancement of class struggle Vs. advancement of forces of production. This has figured in the debate on the problems of the socialist countries as well. Charles Bettleheim, a well known scholar of Communist theory and practice has focussed on this in his writings on Russia and China. Basic to his arguments is the proposition that going for rapid development of forces of production without taking note of the advancement of class struggle will only subvert the ultimate purpose and revisionism sets in. Theory of forces of production is the theory of revisionism. According him, this is also applicable to those societies in which revolution has not taken place and various left parties are adopting different paths of struggles.

In the next two chapters we will see how left parties have come to power and implemented their promises of immediate relief and advanced programmatically, especially in regard to the agrarian front.

Footnotes

1. V.I. Lenin, "The Land Question and the Fight for Freedom", (Moscow : Progress Publishers, p.6).

2. The reference is to the various positions taken by social scientists regarding the mode of production.

3. V. I. Lenin, "If in a country, where agriculture is organised on fully capitalist lines, the capitalist farmers, with aid of the hired labourers, were to carry out agrarian revolution by abolishing the private ownership of land, for instance, that would be a bourgeois revolution, but by no means a peasant revolution. Or if a revolution took place in a country where the agrarian system had become so integrated with the capitalist economy in general that the system couldn't be abolished without abolishing capitalism, and if, say, that revolution put the industrial bourgeoisie in power in place of the automatic bureaucracy - that would be a bourgeois revolution, but by no means a peasant revolution". (C.W. Vol. 13, p. 351.)

4. Lenin, The Land Question and the Fight for Freedom, Mscow : Progress, p. 14.

5. Feudal Latifundia was the name applied by Lenin to the feudal landed estates based on the indentured labour of the peasants dependent on the landlords and burdened by the survivals of feudalism such as labour service and corvee system - the system under which peasant was allotted aland by the landlord for his subsistence in return for the fulfilment of obligations, mainly cultivating landbrds' land without any wages.

6. For a treatment of the regional dimension with particular reference to Kerala - See Pradhan H. Prasad (1985) One important point he makes is that increase in productivity in most of the regions of the country has been a result of agricultural development on traditional lines. This has not brought any progressive change in the relations of production. However, in Kerala and West Bengal there has been a change in the relations of production which, prasad attributes, to effective state intervention in the institutional structure. However, I suggest that the nature of change in the relations of production in Kerala and West Bengal requires more indepth discussion. What Prasad has done is to present the changes in agrarian relations in terms of quantitative dimensions.

7. For a detailed analysis of the agrarian situation and tasks on see the following sources related to the agrarian front of CPI : All India Kisan Sabha : Report of the 20th Session Barasat April 1-5 (1979 : p. 4-30); Ahmad (1972, p.22) Ceiling on Agricultural Land; Reddy, R.S. (1975 : 12-15), What is CPI's Programme, Sinha (1982); Some Questions Concerning Marxism and the Peasantry.

8. We find a more or less similar interpretation by Ranjit Sen who takes a pro-CPI(M) stance:

"In the vast agrarian sector of India, capitalism, though unevenly developed in some areas, is yet to take hold over all or most of it. Feudal and semi-feudal fragmentation of workers and peasants deprive them of the class consciousness that is associated historically with the process of large scale capitalist production. A necessary condition for social transformation is that the consciousness of the masses be aroused; it is imperative that they should be able to identify their main enemies, and to recognise their allies". (1980 : 80). First and foremost agrarian poor need the confidence that within the available resources in the country it is possible to overcome hunger, poverty and unemployment. When they get this understanding they will find out the real enemy responsible for the present misery and impoverishment.

9. In my dialogue with Binoy Choudhary, Minister-in-charge for Land Revenue Government of West Bengal and Peasant leader of the CPI(M) he expressed his views on this issue. When asked, "Do you think that in AIKS and CPI(M) rich preasants are in the leading positions"? , he answered : "They are not in leading positions, but their presence cannot be denied. We are trying to eliminate them".

CHAPTER - VIII

LAND REFORMS UNDER THE COMMUNIST AND LEFT FRONT GOVERNMENTS IN KERALA

The theme of land reforms in India and the left alternative can best be examined with special reference to the experience of left parties in Kerala. Due to multifarious factors Kerala provides the required political atmosphere for the enactment and implementation of land reforms which, on the whole, go to the credit of left parties. At the same time the process of land reforms there has not gone smoothly inspite of a strong left movement because of the constraints and limitations of a bourgeois liberal system. As a result whatever left content and left flavour there is in the process of land reform is absorbed by the system and it becomes very difficult to make out the exact impact it has on the consciousness of the people and their political perceptions. Because of the instability of governments it so happens that a law enacted by a left-dominated coalition. If one examines the party documents and reports one finds that every party lays claim to the success of land reforms. Thus it is very difficult to identify the extent to which the left parties in Kerala have left their mark on land reforms legislation and its implementation. Hence one has to follow

a slightly different method. The methodology of evaluating communist political practice, its real strength and the magnitude of its impact on the policies of whatever government that comes to power cannot however be done by quantitative methods based on positivist social science. In relation to the impact of the left parties on land reform legislation in Kerala I would, therefore, argue:

1. That the impact of a political force, even if it is not enjoying power, has to be seen in terms of the way it is built into the econology and political culture of a geographical areas.

2. The communists, even while out of power, did exert considerable pressure on non-communist, non-left, governments. That means, the difference for the communists between being in power and not being power in Kerala is relative and not absolute, given the fact that the movement acquires more militancy while the communists are out of power so that however reluctant a non-communist coalition government may be it has to reckon with this extra-parliamentary pressure exerted by the left movement. This will be easily found out in the states where communists are weak and have not created a competitive political situation where other bourgeois parties, particularly the Congress, have not felt the need to implement land reforms.

3. As such, if I refer to the periods during which left parties have been in power in Kerala, it should be taken as a mere formal reference and not as an indication that during that period of the communist movement has been at its lowest ebb.

4. Within the broad policy framework of the Congress land reforms programme one has to see what special initiatives the Communist parties have taken; what alternative legislative provisions are incorporated in the enactment of the reform so as to benefit more and more landless people and poor peasants?

5. As is well known, Congress Governments in many other states have failed not in the enactment of laws, but in evolving effective machinery of implementation. It is on this count also viz., the alternatives in terms of evolving an administrative machinery and judicial set up by the communist led state government, that one has to distinguish the policy of the Communists from that of the Congress Party.

6. Above all, the Communists have been more successful in the mobilization of the intended beneficiaries for effective participation in the process of reform and deriving the intended benefits like effective possession and utilization of the distributed land by the landless and bonafide tenants. On the other hand providing physical protection to the beneficiaries, checking the manoeuvres of the losers in the reform should also be a guideline for distinguishing the communist alternative from that of the Congress.

(A) LAND TENURES, THE AGRARIAN PROBLEM AND PEASANT MOVEMENT IN KERALA

The Agrarian system in Kerala at the time when the communists came to power in 1957 was marked by : (1) highly skewed distribution of land (2) huge number of landless agrarian households; (3) existence of small and dwarf peasantry who were allotted small pieces of land and who are characterised as bonded owners by Lieten (Lieten, 1982 : 28).

In the course of history different land tenures evolved in Malabar, Cochin and Travancore, Particularly in terms of distribution the Malabar districts were dominated by huge estates while Travancore - Cochin was dominated by tiny peasant

proprietors. Thus in Travancore - Cochin the number of ownership holdings of over five acres constituted only five percent of the total holdings while in the three Malabar districts their percentage went up to more than thirty covering almost all the land. However, most of the huge estates according to official thinking of the Congress party, would not be covered under ceiling because they were forest and plantation lands. Some of them were also lands identified as efficient farms cultivated on scientific lines.

In the context of this, Lieten discusses the communist alternative to the official Congress land reforms policy. The Communists initiated land reforms laws that would bring this category of lands under ceiling. Nearly 7,97,000 acres involved in this category would be identified as surplus land which would be available to nearly 4,00,000 agricultural labour households.

The evolution of land tenures in the three main regions of Kerala also required a meticulous care in the fomulation of land reform laws so as ultimately to ameliorate the direct producers. A brief review of the evolution of land tenure in the different regions of the state is presented below.

1. Malabar

Soon after the British extended their rule to Malabar in 1782 they reversed the land policy of the Mysoreans who had ruled Malabartill then. Initially they leased out land

to numerous petty Rajas, but latter resumed its direct control as the Rajas were not successful in collecting the revenue. With the primary motive of collecting maximum land revenue through the creation of a feudal class the British disturbed the customary land relations in Malabar. The Janmis or customary landowners viz. Rajas, temple managements, Namboodri Brahmans and Naduvazhis, were declared as sole prorietors of land subject to the condition that they would pay revenue to the government (Namboodripad 1985 : 173). The holders of Kanam tenure (Kanakkarans) and the holders of Verupattam tenures (the Verupattakkarans who were a form of superior tenants) came under the ordinary category of tenant or Kudian. The Kanakkaran leased in land from Janmis in lieu of annual rent in lump sum (Kanam) and this was renewable every 12 years. It is this deliberate change in the customary land relation between the customary landowners and tenants and its ruthless implementation that created large scale discontent among the tenantry leading to violent uprisings of Moplahs. Nearly twenty two outbreaks occured during the period from 1836 to 1853. The British Government conducted enquiries to know the reasons for discontent. Only in 1887, it came to realise that the main reason behind the discontent was the destruction of traditional land relations and the resulting insecurity for the tenants. It then enacted the Malabar Compensation for Tenants Improvement Act 1887. Another act was passed in 1900 rectifying some defects in the original Act.

Even this proved to be inadequate to relieve the peasantry, a majority of whom were small Kanakkan and Verumpattakkaran. Both kinds of tenants were not paid compensation for any improvement made by them on the land, by the Janmis'. The tenants were very weak to challenge the Janmis. Who adopted various devices to evade the law. An enquiry into the land tenures suggested that the tenants had to be protected from rackrents, exhorbitant renewal fees, evictions and other extractions. It recommended that the raiyats who cultivated land for 15 years be conferred occupancy rights.

When Kannakkar failed to gain anything because the Government did not do any thing that would be anti-Janmis, they took to struggles and formed the Malabar Tenancy Association in 1915. However, this organisation came under the control of the superior tenants i.e. Kanakkaran, and the interests of the Verumpattakkaran who were tenants at will were left unfulfilled. Even the Malabar Tenancy Act 1929 did not do much to ameliorate the conditions of these tenants.

2. Travancore

In Travancore different tenures emerged wherein one half of the land was under the direct control of the state and this was known as Pandaravaka, Pattom, Otti, Inam and Viruthi. The rest of the land was held under three categories of tenures i.e. Janmom or freehold lands held by relatives of royal

families and Rajas; tax-free lands held by Temples i.e. Devaswams and Brahmins i.e. Brahmaswam and the last category of lands belonged to various cheiftains and others.

Unlike the British rulers in Malabar, the Government of Travancore favoured the interests of cultivators and promoted agricultural development. Those who converted waste lands into cultivable lands were given remission of taxes and tax concessions after the cultivation started, Syrican christians and Ezhavas benefited from this policy and became Sircar tenants. Although the cultivating tenants were not the owners of the state lands they enjoyed security of tenure, moderate assessment by the State and protection from evictions. One important thing to note is that the Brahmins and Nayars land-owners cultivated their lands with the help of sub-tenants and tenants-at-will. In course of time ownership rights were given to all the cultivating tenants who became owners of their lands whereby they got rights to transfer, sell and mortgage their land. This gave a big push to agricultural development on capitalist and commercial lines. Here also tenants-at-will and sub-tenants did not benefit from tenancy laws.

3. Cochin

In Cochin also three sub-tenures evolved namely Verumpattam, Kanam and Inam; the most prevalent one being Verumpattam. All the three types together covered nearly

40% of the land. Rest of the land was Uravaka land or Janmom land held under 14 categories according to the caste positions of the owners of the land. Because the State did not pass any law in favour of the direct cultivators, the actual cultivators suffered from the exploitative terms set by the Janmis. Thus in Cochin even by the end of the 19th Century there was no significant improvement in the position of the tenants holding either Pandarvaka land or Private Janmom lands.

Some changes took place with respect to land tenure after a survey was conducted in 1905 by a series of enactments Pandarvaka Verupattom tenants were given ownership rights and tenants incorporated under Devaswom were given fixity of tenure. The Cochin Tenancy Act of 1914 provided fixity of tenure for certain periods and payment of compensation for the improvements made by the tenants. The conditions of Kanam tenants were further improved by the Cochin Tenancy Act 1938. The pressure for the fulfillment of the demands of Verumpattam tenants led to the exactment of Verumpattomdars Act 1943 which provided them permanent occupancy rights.

Thus the evolution of land tenures in the three different regions was quite different. In Malabar the British fulfilled its interests through a feudal intermediary group viz. Janmi without taking into consideration the welfare of the peasants. In Travancore, the Janmis power got weakened and there emerged a class of superior tenants who in alliance with the king became

the supporters of the British. The colonial demand for surplus was met by high production which was promoted by pro-tenant policies. The same could not happen in Malabar where the agricultural sector remained backward because of the rigid tenurial conditions. This is in spite of the fact that Malabar came under the impact of the world market and large scale, commercialization. Namboodripad compares the problem in Malabar to that of Ireland under the domination of the British (1985 : 175).

As Nossiter (1982) writes :

> "Malabar was a neglected outpost of Madras on which the British spent little beyond the requirements of law and order. In contrast the Travancore and Cochin Governments actively stimulated agriculture, commerce and industry, built roads and canals, founded schools, colleges hospitals, and in the 1930's jointly modernised the Port of Cochin". (Nossiter 1982 : 15).

6. Origins of the Peasant Movement

It is against this background of evolution of land tenures in Kerala that the ramifications of the peasant movement that took shape have to be understood. The crucial thing to understand is that most of the reforms discussed above were undertaken under the pressure of the struggles of the peasantry. The radical wing of the Congress Socialist Party (CSP) was instrumental in always putting the peasant problem, particularly the problem of tenancy in the forefront of discussion. Another important thing to be noted is that

an effort to build peasants and workers' unity was earnestly made and an antifeudal and anti-imperialist direction to the struggles was given while the peasant was within the fold of the CSP. As Kurien notes this was not done on class basis as understood from the Marxist point of view. The broad idea in the first meeting of the Congress Socialist Party held in Calicut under the chairmanship of A. Kelappan and which incorporated Nehru's Socialist ideas was :

> "The organisation of peasants and workers on socialist principles be made a principal item of the constructive programme of the Congress". (Kurein 1982 : 53).

With the emergence of the radicals within the Congress like A.K. Gopalan, E.M.S. Namboodripad and E.T. Gopalan as the leaders of the newly formed Kerala Peasants Association the peasant movement took a different turn. The movement spread and the scope of the demands became broadbased. The question of basic reforms in agrarian structure and linking the peasant movement with the national movement for independence came to the force. Now the association underlined the need for linking up the problems of the peasantry with the demands of agricultural labourers.

After the formation of the CSP in 1934 at Bombay as a radical wing of the Congress Party, its extension to Malabar provided the embryonic form of the future Communist Party in Kerala. The CSP like the Communist Party elsewhere worked as a massbased party in Kerala where it identified with the problems of the oppressed in a feudal social set up and took

to struggles for solution to their problems.

Nossiter writes that there was little to differentiate the CSP from the CPI at the ideological level. The CSP had accepted Marxism explicitly in 1936 and adopted it in its anti-imperialist programme and also admitted communists as members. "Between 1934 and 1935 the real difference between the two parties had been tactical. The CSP recognised the need to use the national movement to advance socialism, not in the expectation of converting Congress but of splitting it into progressive and reactionary wings. The CPI still regarded Congress as the organ of bourgeois nationalism and counter-revolutionary force with which no alliance was possible. During the course of 1935 the Soviet Union and also the banned CPI changed to a united front line, and during the second part of the year Krishna Pillai and Namboodripad (of CSP) had a detailed exchange of views with Sundarayya, the Andhra CPI leader. By early 1937 it was difficult to distinguish betweenthe CSP and the CPI in Kerala. (Nossiter, 1982 : 75).

The Communist party was born in Kerala late in 1939, but enough spade work had been done for it through the CSP. In the late 1930s, EMS Namboodripad joined the CPI and practically brought the entire CSP organisation in the area into the sphere of the Communist party. This, however, also happened in Andhra Pradesh and Madras, where Sundarayya and

P. Ramamurthi effected similar coups d'et. al. What brought popularity to the Communist party is that it led the social renaissance movement intended to uplift the socially oppressed classes who had been suffering from the heirarchical, caste system, with the associated and tyrannical customs. As Bhabani Sen Gupta writes :

> "Untill recently, the untouchables in Kerala had to keep a prescribed minimum physical distance away from not only the upper caste Brahmans and the Nairs, but even the lower caste Kamlas and Ezhavas. Vertical divisions of caste, religion and economic pursuits have been traditionally more rigid in Kerala than anywhere else in India; even to-day Hindu society is divided into four slowly melting caste groups; Brahmans, Nairs, Ezhavas and Scheduled Castes." (Sen Gupta, 1978 : 169)[2]

(B) COMMUNIST PARTY AND LAND REFORMS IN KERALA

Till its formation in 1956, the present Kerala state was divided into two separate regions. But when these were merged, the State as a whole presented wide differences in terms of land tenures. In Malabar there was widerspread discontentment among the tenants which led to the growth of peasant movement under the Communist Party. In Travancore-Cochin the problems were of developed agriculture. Here the demands of the superior tenants were met and the objective conditions for a peasant uprising were not there. On the other hand the problems of inferior tenants were pressing. As a result the communists concentrated on the demands of superior tenants in the Malabar region and those of inferior tenants,

agro-factory workers and the growing numbers of agricultural labourers in the plantations in the Travancore region. (Prakash, 1982 : 79).

The agrarian structure, particularly the land situation, in Kerala is described below. Tables 8.1 and 8.2 give some idea of land ownership in Kerala in comparison to India as a whole and in the different regions of the State.

Thus it will be seen from Table 8.1 that in 1951 the per capita net sown area in Kerala was only 0.38 acres (the lowest among all states) as compared to the all India average of 1.09 acres. Kerala also had a much lower percentage of peasant proprietorship, a higher percentage of tenants and non-cultivating rentiers (absentee landlords) and a significantly high percentage of agricultural labourers than the all-India average. Thus the agrarian structure of Kerala exhibited an altogether different pattern than that of the country as a whole.

Table 8.1

Agrarian Structure : Kerala and India, 1951

Occupational Class	Percentage of Agricultural House Holds	
	Kerala	India
1. Owners (cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned)	35.3	67.8
2. Tenants (cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned)	23.1	12.6
3. Agricultural Labourers	39.2	17.9
4. Non-cultivating rentiers	2.4	1.8
per capita net sown area	0.38	1.09

Source : Herring 1983 : 160

Table 8.2 presents the agrarian structure of Kerala at the time of the formation of the State. The data is presented for different regions of the State.

Table 8.2

Agrarian Structure of Kerala : 1957-58

Tenurial Status	Percentage of Agricultural Population			
	Travancore	Cochin	Malabar	Kuttanad
Landless labourer	13	19	12	41
Owner-cultivator	56	29	10	18
Tenant-cultivator	25	50	75	35
Mortgage	3	-	-	-
Rentier	1	2	3	6
Mortgagor	2	-	-	-

Source : Herring, 1983 : 161

It can be seen from Table 8.2 that at the time of the communists coming to power in Kerala landless labourers constituted 41 per cent of the agricultural population in Kuttanad region, while their proportion was two times 13, 19 and 12 per cent in, Travancore, Cochin and Malabar, respectively. Owner cultivators dominated in Travancore, as they constituted 56 per cent of the agricultural population as compared to 29 per cent in Cochin, 18 per cent in Kuttanad and only 10 per cent in Malabar. Tenant cultivators were predominant in Malabar (75%) and Cochin (50%). They

constituted one-fourth of the agricultural population in Travancore, and more than one-third in Kuttanad. Whereas Travancore had 3 per cent of the agricultural population as mortgagees the other three regions had none. The rentier class was maximum in number in Kuttanad (6%), only 1 per cent in Travancore and 2 per cent and 3 per cent in Cochin and Malabar, respectively. The mortgagors (2%) were found only in Travancore.

While Table 8.2 illustrates the dominance of tenants and labourers, this however, does not reflect the full picture and importance of the agricultural labourers because the landholdings are so small that most of the owners and tenant cultivators depend upon agricultural labour for their livelihood.

While the conditions of tenants characterised by insecurity rack-renting and extremely unprofitable cultivation, the conditions of labourers were worse than those of the tenants. They, particularly the tied labourers, were suffering from debt bondage while the unattached day labourers were suffering from insecurity. During most of the time in the year they either semistarved or lived on tapioca and root vegetables. On the other hand the rentiers collected their taxes irrespective of the paying capacity of the tenants.

Another peculiar aspect of Kerala's social structure is the coincidence of caste and class. The upper landowning

classes are Caste Hindus. This fact poses a challenge to the communists in the fifties. Crucial to the overall strategy of the communists was linking the stance of opposition to landlordism with the task of social reform aimed at attacking the feudal type of social stratification and consciousness. There had to be a close fit between the overall strategy of the communist party and the reform of the agrarian structure that was characterised by extreme concentration of land on the hand and the prevelence of tenancy on a large scale on the other. Thus, in addition to a radical tenancy reform the situation would require substantial redistribution of land to the agricultural labourers and the landpoor - whether in the category of tenant cultivators or poor peasants.

Much in line with the Congress Agrarian Reforms Programme the Communist Party in Kerala also wanted the reduction of the fuedal burden on the peasant and to give the actual cultivator security and thereby make agricultural development possible. However, the problem was with the definition of the cultivator i.e. whether he should personally cultivate the land with his physical labour or could do so with the help of outside labour and still be called a cultivator.

Strategically the Communist Party tried to fit the land reforms policy into its programme of bourgeois democratic revolution which, aimed at breaking the backbone of feudalism

and semi-feudalism of all kinds, and parasitic landlordism.

The CPI, while tacitly assuming that a capitalist transformation would take place, accused the Indian Government and the class policies which it pursued. It reproached the Congress for striving to create a class of substantial landholders "by transforming feudal landlords into capitalist landlords and also by helping and strengthening the rich peasant, a class which can be depended upon to produce enough surplus of agricultural wealth to meet the requirements of capitalist development in the country" (Ajoy Ghosh, 1958; Lieten, 1982: 79; Nossiter, 1982 : 150).

The CPI described it's path as a non-capitalist path. In order to circumvent the capitalist path of the Congress the non-capitalist path would allow capitalist forces to develop in agriculture but without its destructive consequences for the actual tillers of the land. This would be possible if the state intervenes effectively in the process. Logically, the realisation of this would be ensured only when a party wedded to the poor and the landless comes to power. As Ghosh wrote in 1958:

> "The formation of this class alignment as a necessary prerequisite for meaningful land reforms was pereceived by the national council meeting of the CPI at Madras in October 1958 as a complex struggle of class alignment depending upon the nature of issues involved and the dominant character of class relations in the area concerned, and based under all conditions on the unity of poor peasants and agricultural labourers in firm

and unshakable alliance with the middle peasant". (Lieten, 1982 : 79).

This was not an easy task, because there were a number of overlapping class positions between agricultural labourers, small holders, tenants at will and small landlords (Lietßn, Ibid.)

It is thus clear that the CPI favoured on the whole the capitalist path with a serious concern for development of the forces of production and linking this strategy with electoral struggles and participation in the governments by the communist representatives.

(C) THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS : ENACTMENTS, PROBLEMS AND AMENDMENTS

Within forty eight hours of the assumption of office the first communist ministry (1957-59) passed an ordinance known as the Kerala stay of Eviction Proceedings Ordinance to afford security to both tenants of various kinds and the hutment dwellers - the Kudikidappukarans. The Agrarian Reforms Bill was passed by the State Assembly only on 10th June 1959. Before it got the presidents assent the ministry was ousted. When the Bill came back from the President in 1961 the Congress-PSP Government was in power. This government wanted to reconsider the Bill. After some drastic amendments were incorporated to accommodate the landed interests it was ultimately passed in 1961. Yet, the

implementation was held up by the stay orders of the Supreme Court in 1961 and the High Court in 1963. An amended Act passed in 1963 came into force in 1964.

MAIN PROVISIONS OF THE KERALA LAND REFORMS ACT 1964

1. Land to the Tenant :

The Bill transfers the rights over lands cultivated by tenant farmers to the State. The tenants could buy the lands they cultivated by paying annuity. The price fixed was 16 times the fair rent to be paid in sixteen yearly instalments or 12 times the rent fixed if paid in lumpsum. The dispossessed landlords were entitled to compensation in cash or bonds at the rate of 16 times the fair rent in the case of the first 50 acres and 6 times the rent above fifty acres. The law provided for a broad definition so as to include various kinds of hutment dwellers and cultivating tenants so that majority of the tenants-at-will could be entitled to buy lands. The tenanted lands could be resumed only on certain conditions vis. For extension of any place of religion or worship; and for construction of buildings for residential purposes and for self cultivation. However, those religious institutions already having some land being cultivated by tenants were not allowed to resume land. The landlords could resume only 20 cents for the purpose of buildings provided that if the tenants possession was less

than one acre, then the tenant would be allowed to retain 20 cents - small landholders who possessed land less than the tenants holding could resume the whole land. Which they cultivated as tenants.

The bill made drastic changes in the pattern of rent. In addition to drastic reduction of rates, arrears of rent were written off to some extent. The tenants got the right of purchase land from the state.

2. Ceiling on Landholdings and Land to the Landless :

The ceiling was fixed at 15 acres for double crop wet land and 30 acres for single crop dry land (irrespective of whether the land was owned or possessed otherwise), exemption being given in the case of gift and transfer. Surplus land was to be distributed to tenants whose land had been resumed, expropriated landlords, co-operative socieites of agricultural labourers and agricultural labourers. The Act on the whole could be distinguished from those in other states as it categorically favoured tenants-at-will. In most of the states it is only the privileged, occupancy tenants and rich peasantry who benefited from the tenancy laws. The agrarian agricultural labourers who received their payment in a fixed share of the produce were also recognised as tenants in the Act. Personal cultivation was so defined that very few evictions took place. (Bettelheim, 1968 : 221).

It is crucial for the purpose of this study to discuss some of the issues involved in the legislation and implementation of land reforms by the communist government or communist led united front. The land reforms experiment in Kerala shows that however popular the party may be, both while in power and out of power, it cannot go ahead with its programme given the intricacies of electoral and parliamentary politics. A radical reform from above seems well nigh impossible. The Act, as Bettelheim commented, was still bourgeois, notwithstanding some radical provisions.

The attitudes of the members of the Assembly towards the Act reflected the views of the various landed sections. The PSP members expressed contradictory views on the Act. Some like P.R. Kurup wlecomed it while others like P. Chandrashekhar criticised the provisions of the Act as not progressive enough. The representatives of the landed interests-the Christians and Nairs-vehemently opposed the Act. It is they who ultimately managed to get the communist government ousted (Lietin, 1982 : 88).

The Kerala Land Reforms Act 1964 was an effectively watered down version of the original. Bill of 1959 passed by the Communist Government. The changes made by the PSP-Congress alliance were as follows:

(1) The Kerala Land Reforms Act did not provide for the rehabilitation of tenants who had been evicted after the formation of the State, as the bill of 1959 had done.

(2) The definition of 'Plantation' was changed so as to include inter-spersed agricultural land within the boundaries of the plantation, and the plantations, were exempted from the ceiling provisions.

(3) The land belonging to religious charitable trusts or educational institutions of 'public nature' and public trusts were exempted from the purview of the Act.

(4) A small holder was defined as one with rights in less than five acres.

(5) The political representatives of the Land Board and Land Tribunal were replaced by Government nominees.

Even this new Act could not be implemented thoroughly because the Kerala High Court declared it ultra vires of the Indian constitution. The PSP-Congress Government enacted a new legislation called the Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963 which came into force from, April 1964. The new Act reduced the possibility of acquiring surplus land for distribution to marginal cultivators and agricultural labourers because the major portion of the land was under platations. A number of sales, divisions of property and transfer of lease rights had taken place which helped the landlords to evade the Act. (Raj and Tarakan 1981 ; Prakash 1982).

Herring (1983) notes specifically the far reaching consequences of the above changes brought out by the Congress-PSP Government.

> "The Kerala Land Reforms Act eliminated the core of the Communist reform; instead of compulsory vesting of landlord's rights in the Government for transfer to the tenants, the legislation provided a laissez-faire enabling provision - tenants and landlords could work out purchase schemes mutually through the land tribunals (Sec. 54). In effect the abolition of landlordism was temporarily removed from the States' agenda; a traditional tenure reform replaced land to the tiller. Rents were fixed, though at higher levels than in the Communist bill, and security of tenure was mandated. A ceiling was fixed, varying between 15 and 36 'ordinary' acres. Exemptions from the ceiling were allowed for commercial estates, religious-charitable institutions, plantations and spice gardens, dairy and cattle breeding farms, the capital-intensive Kuttanad Kayal lands, and other such enterprises that were deemed to be 'in the public interest'. Voluntary transfers of land were allowed on the basis of 'natural love and affection', partition, and to a religious, charitable or educational foundation" (Herring : 175).

Till the Communist dominated United Front came to power in 1967 there was instability and President's rule in the State of Kerala. Because of these factors the implementation of land reforms suffered a great deal. There was some progress in regard to the fixity of tenure and conferment of ownership rights on tenants. In regard to other provisions, the Congress party in the government had no political will for speedy implementation of ceiling laws. Further, evasion took place on a large scale. The year 1965 showed a sharp increase in the rate of creation of new tenancies due to the tenants, compliance

with landlords persuasion and coercion and mortgage arrangements. The latter was, actually, a concealed form of tenancy since the actual cultivators were Verumpattamdars (tenants-at-will). Under the Congress rule these types of tenants did not benefit at all.

On coming to power the Left and United Front Government 1967-69, led by the CPI(M) issued the "Stay or Evictions Proceedings Ordinance" and all kinds of evictions were stayed. To undo what was done during the Congress interlude provisions were made for cancelling forced sales of land for recovery of debts etc. The Front tried to reconsider some of the radical provisions of the Act of 1959 which were dropped by the Congress - PSP Ministry. Ms. K.R. Goury, able leader of the CPI(M) and the Revenue Minister of the Left Front Government, was incharge of drafting the Bill. This time, in spite of the fact that the leadership of the CPI(M) was much more radical that of the CPI, the drafting and the whole legislative process was very slow. Herring has noted this tendency with concern as follows :

> ".....the 1959 experience recommended both extra-ordinary caution and construction of an airtight reform with scrupulous attention to constitutional and legal questions. The presence of the conservative Muslim League in the coalition introduced political reasons for caution, but it should be stressed that the fate of the Agrarian Relations Act (1959) imposed formidable drafting problems - the legislation had to be flawless. Moreover, the complicated legal manoeuvers

> of owners, such as "mortgaging" land to the tenants obtaining misleading documents regarding tenurial status, and so on, introduced drafting complication. In addition to these constraints, the Government faced an immediate crisis in procurement and distribution of food because of extreme nation-wide shortages". (1983 : 186).

Thus it can fairly be said that the 1959 experience was a watershed in communist theory and practice in India. It occasioned a freshness of approach in the context of the formation of Kerala State and the combination of the left movements from the three regions. There was spontaniety everywhere. But later the Ministry was ousted and various undesirable things, defeating the purpose of the communist alternative to land reform, happened and the hopes of the cadres and the masses dwindled. In other words there was an impasse in the whole process of the communist experiment. May be this provided the context for the division in the party at the regional level and hence the split.

At the same time after the split in the year 1964, competition between the communist parties became very intense so that both the communist parties were trying to retain the original support base of the parent party. The newly emerged CPI(M) faced the dilemma of proving to be radical in comparison with the 'right' communist party (CPI) on the one hand and being cautious about any impending political crisis like the ouster of the Front Government in reincorporating

the radical provisions of the 1959 Act on the other. Hence, the delay and slowness in drafting the Bill.

The worst was the fact that the United Front Government didn't stay in power to implement the land. The reasons for the fall were electoral politics in the context of socio-economic configuration and differences of various kinds between the CPI and the CPI(M). There were all kinds of charges against the United Front. Of particular importance is the charge that the CPI(M) had politicised the distribution of land by selecting the beneficiaries from among its supporters and also used the police in a partisan manner. Whatever it is, the fall of the United Front had a serious implications for the Left policy logic as whole. In 1959 it was the Centre which ousted the Communist Government. The Communists had then raised the question of centre-state relations and bourgeois landlord government at the Centre ousting the communist government at the state level in an extraparliamentary and unconstitutional manner. This time the United Front consisting of CPI(M), CPI three socialist parties, the Muslim League, and an agrarian party led by a radical Catholic priest sank in the whirlpool of electoral politics. However, the Front lost power in a constitutional manner thus leaving no scope for raising idological or basic constitutional questions with which it justified its tactics of bourgeois democratic revolution. This is illustrative of

the limitation of radical land reforms in a parliamentary framework.

Interestingly, the CPI with the informal support of the Congress Party and the Kerala Congress formed a mini-front in November 1969. The CPI(M) which did not have any hopes of implementation of land reforms under the "mini-front" charged the government with 'go slow' tactics and wanted to adopt an agitational approach and roused the consciousness of the beneficiaries to take the law into their own hands to implement the reforms. The programme consisted of going beyond the technical provisions of the Act : Kudikidappukars should not pay rent to the landlords; all kinds surplus land should be forcibly occupied; the Kudikidappukar should annex 0.1 acres of land, cultivate it and enjoy the produce and the opporession by the government of this agitational and active involvement of the beneficiaries should be resisted with the strength of the movement. (Herring, Ibid : 194). Whereas the CPI(M) adopted the agitational approach for effective implementation of land reforms the CPI accused the CPI(M) of thwarting the reform.

3. Administration and Land Reforms in the Communist Policy Logic

I have discussed the problem of administration of land reforms in the Congress party logic in Ch. 5. The Congress

governments at the centre and the states did not make changes in the bureaucratic structure. The result was that the old colonial nature of this apparatus came into the way of implementation. The policy in the case of the Communist Party is not to do away with the administration altogether or to make drastic changes in structure. The basic strategy has been to associate the people's representatives by setting up people's committees at each and every level of administrative structure and to build co-operation between the various departments and the people in the process of implementation. This representation includes the opposition parties also. However, the communist parties have been accused of partisonship in the inclusion of party candidates in these committees. (Namboodripad, 1985 : 143-144). Namboodripad's answer to such criticism is that the opposition parties representing vested interests think that it is harmful to them if the administration is reoriented to work according to the requirements of the people. For them administration is best left with permanent officials who sould not be bothered by the interference of the people.

Namboodripad's contention is that the administration should be democratised at each and every level as was recommended by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. He is of the opinion that it is the people's representatives (legilators and

the ministers) to lay down the policy and for the permanent officials to implement it. Namboodripad further, clarified that :

> "For after all the job of the permanent official is a specialised one; execution of policies and administration of day-to-day affairs cannot be carried out by somebody who has not had the benefit of some theoritical and much more of practical training in the art of public administration; the average people's representative cannot be expected to have this training and experience. It would therefore be unwise for a legislator, or even for a minister, to arrogate to himself the job of carrying on day-to-day administration. An exceedingly capable and efficient political leader may well mess things up if he takes upon himself the jobs which are to be carried out by a permanent official". (Ibid : 147).

Namboodripad distinguishes the bureaucrats in independent India from those in the colonial period as follows:

> "....permanent officials under the present democratic set up are citizens enjoying all the democratic freedom of a free-citizen though these freedoms are undoubtedly restricted to a certain extent by the mere fact of their being Government servants. They are, therefore, men and women with patriotism, self-respect and personal initiative, they are not the self-like autonomatons that they were expected to be under the British or princely rule. That being so, they should be allowed so much freedom and personal initiative in carrying out their jobs as is consistent with the carrying out of the general politices laid down by the people acting through their representatives in the legislature and the ministry". (Ibid).

It is very clear that the CPI(M), as reflected in the above citations of Namboodripad, has stakes in the present bureaucratic apparatus. The only thing is that people's

representatives should vigilantly oversee the day-to-day administration.

I would argue that this attitude to the bureaucracy is not embedded with any class approach. Even if some benevolent and progressive bureaucrats are there it is highly unMarxist to leave the programme of implementation of land reforms in their hands. It implies a purely administrative action without any real involvement of the intended beneficiaries on class basis which does not have anything to do with class consciousness or advancing the class struggle. However these are the problems of the parliamentary path. Having chosen it one has to compromise on this count.

When the Kerala context is taken into account the prospects of vigilance by peoples committees is very bleak. There is no guarantee that a left party will continue in power and whichever party comes to power it will cut the bureaucracy to size according to its motives. Thus the attitude of the left parties towards democracy is not that of the traditional Marxist way of looking at it.

The Communist policy logic of land reforms faced few problems from the bureaucrats as a group. On the contrary they have been involved in expediting the process of implementation - a great deal, tribunals have been constituted

to look into resumption of land and for ceiling cases. The tribunals consist of a revenue official or an advocate as chairman and two members elected by the local authority of the area of work. Because of the Communist movement being strong in the village councils (panchayats) this composition implied a 'strong and radical' representation of the rural strata. This I think reflects the party's idea of building co-operation between the administrators and people's representatives.

The Land Board is primarily assigned the job of vesting and distribution of excess land above the ceiling limit and also with powers to control the land tribunals. The Land Board consists of the head of the Land Revenue Department as chairman and a member elected from the Legislative Assembly. (Bergman, 1984 ;54).

It should be mentioned that in the context of the highly politicised atmosphere in Kerala there is less scope for any default on the part of the administrators. However, the implementation has suffered to some extent because of problems of administration. The most important of these has been the maintenance of records, a problem which has persisted inspite of the fact that there were mass agitations to expedite the process. An amendment was made in the law in 1972 providing for the inclusion of

village level committees and taluk level Land Board with broad powers and new duties to compel the owners to file declarations. The amendment included the formation of a cabinet level Land Reforms Review Board.

As pointed by CPI(M) the administration has failed to take action against illegal transfers and non-compliance with regulations. Though penal sanctions existed they have not been implemented. From January 1, 1970 to 1972 prosecution proceedings were filed against only three landlords. The 'mini-front' government failed to investigate with concern for the landless the extent of surplus lands identified in the land grab movement led by the CPI(M). This was estimated to be above 1,35,000 acres. On the contrary the militants particularly the followers of CPI(M) were jailed. Secondly, the scrutiny and preparation of records was a tedious task. Delay in its completion led to the frequent postponement of the deadline for filing surplus land forms. Herring's contention is that the landgrab agitations ignored these technical problems and thwarted the implementation. However, I would argue that the CPI(M), when out of power, was more concerned with agitation to pressurise the Government and this has something to do with the problems of land reform from above Vs. land reform below within a bourgeois framework. Thirdly, although the Amendment of 1972 was a welcome feature, in that it provided for the constitution of land boards, its

implementation at the local level was delayed. The government justified the delay in terms of the need to consult legal experts. Fourthly, the judicial obstacles thwarted the efforts of the government to evolve joint farming by way of joint cultivation of Kayal lands. Fifthly, in the absence of records and a machinery for detecting cases of concealed tenancies, various kinds of evasions and evictions took place which worked on the whole to the advantage of landlords. The tendency was more persistent in areas which were marked by low political consciousness. Lastly, the effect of the emergency, on the pace of implementation was obstructive because during the emergency the mass agitations were banned which otherwise acted as constraints on evasions and other abuses. Further, the whole process was bureaucratisied and implementation depended on the individual characteristics of the officials. On the whole, and seen from the leftist point of view, the emergency blunted the ongoing process of implementation of land reforms in the context of interacting administrative and agitationist mechanisms.

It is known to all that the CPI which led the 'mini-front' in Kerala during the emergency supported the declaration of emergency and the measures taken by the Congress government at the centre. Moreover, in the context

of a very weak mass base of the CPI in Kerala and the strong rural base of the CPI(M), it is the situation of emergency that provided a chance to the CPI to stay in power. It is not surprising that the results of whatever implementation that took place under the 'mini-front' and during the emergency were credited to the Congress Government which imposed the emergency.

4. Land Reforms and the Judiciary :

Left parties, particularly, the CPI(M), have explicated their stand on various occasions on the role of judiciary in the bourgeois social system. There is no indication given any where that for the purpose of their programme in the present stage of revolution the judicial system required drastic changes at any level. Namboodripad has stated :

> "----our approach to the judicial system, is.... guided, firstly, by a scrupulous adherence to the principle that the verdict given by the courts should be respected in individual cases to the extent that they are the laws of the land until they are changed by the legislature" (1982 : 314).

The position of CPI(M) is that even if the Marxists want changes in the laws they have to be brought about by the legislature to make those changes legitimate in the eyes of the law. Scrupulous restraint is necessary in casting reflection on individual judgements and attributing motives to them. Marxists should also educate the people continuously as to how the judiciary serves the exploiting

classes but avoid bringing courts into contempt and avoid rediculing them. It will be interesting to see how the judiciary in Kerala responded to the Left parties' policies of land reforms and how the left led governments particularly the CPI-led mini-front dealt with the judicial problem.

From the beginning both the Supreme Court and the High Court of Kerala have been coming in the way land reforms legislation and policies of the left parties. The Agrarian Reforms Bill passed by the Communist Ministry was declared ultra vires by the Supreme Court in 1961 and that of the Congress-PSP government was stayed by the Kerala High Court in 1963.

Herring (1983 : 197-208) points to the frequency of the judgements declaring the land reform laws ultra vires. In October, 1970 the High Court of Kerala struck down sections 7 and 7 B(1) of the Act which accorded 'deemed tenant' status to "certain cultivators honestly believing themselves to be tenants but lacking documentary evidence". The court held that this encourages fake tenancies created with the understanding of landlords and tenants. Asserting that only an orderly change would be in the interest of the general public the court held that the 1969 Act passed during the CPI(M) led United Front was not a reform. It did not intend a change for the better judged by the general public interest, and hence, could not be protected by the constitution.

The High Court also struck down "the pension for discharge of arrears of rent" as the measure was not protected by Art 31 A which protects agrarian reform. The ruling reads as follows :

> "The liquidation of debts due from tenants cannot be said to be necessary for implementing the law relating to acquisition..... The produce from the land is not solely of the tenant's own making. The landlord provides the capital asset necessary for the purpose, namely, the land and it cannot be in interests of the general public to deprive him of his due share of the produce" (Herring Ibid :199).

In spite of the counter argument by people like Justice Mathew who argued for precedence of the problem of mass starvation over the fundamental rights, the impact of the judicial controversy on the whole had an adverse effect on the legislation and implementation of land reforms. It can fairly be said that along with the problems both political and constitutional, that may be brought by an unfavourable central government, land reforms legislated and implemented by progressive left oriented state governments have to face the judicial scrutiny at state and central levels. As a result, whatever are the reasons, the progressive content of the reform laws, more often than not, will be lost and the immediacy of reform undermined.

(D) IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND REFORMS LEGISLATION

The regulations and procedures regarding the implementation of the land reforms, reactions of the various sections having interest on land and the speed with which the work has been accomplished give us some hints about the impact of the land reforms on redistribution of land, class differentiation and also the implications it has for the strategy and tactics of the communist parties. In this section I discuss the issue with data from secondary courses on three important features of land reforms in Kerala : (1) Abolition of tenancy and conferment of ownership rights on tenants; (2) Progress of disposal of Kudikidappu case i.e. disposal of homestead land to the hutment dwellers; and (3) Implementation of ceiling laws.

1. Abolition of Agricultural Tenancy and Conferment of Ownership Rights on Tenants :

A distinguishing feature of tenancy provisions of land reforms in Kerala is that the government can file *suo moto* cases for conferment of ownership rights on tenants. This is unlike the case in many states. This provision was there in the A.P. (Telangana area) Tenancy and Agricultural Lands Act 1950 whereby the government could declare the protected tenants as owners of the lands they tilled from a fixed

date. But because of judicial obstacles this could not be implemented except in Khammam District and the Mulug Taluk of Warangal District. In Kerala on the contrary the provision of leaving the onus of conferming proprietory rights on tenants to the government has worked out well. The unequal legal battles between the landlords and tenants and consequent failure of the tenancy reform could be avoided.

In a preliminary survey conducted by the Bureau of Economics and Statistics, government of Kerala the total number of tenanted holdings was estimated to be 25 lakhs. However, the cases filed from the beginning have been more than this number and have increased from time to time. Table 8.3 illustrates the progress in implementation of conferment of ownership rights on the tenants. The total number of cases filed including suo moto cases filed by the government comes to 37.71 lakhs till October 31, 1983. The bulk of these had been filed by September 1977 and decided by December 1983.

Further, a large number of cases filed by the tenants have been rejected. The inference one can draw from this tendency is that most of them are bogus tenancies created in good faith between fake tenants and landlords to circumvent the implementation of the ceiling laws. In some cases the tenants were potential buyers of the land that was shown to be under tenancy.

Table 8.3

Progress of Tenancy Reforms in Kerala

Date & year	Total No. of applications filed + booked suo moto	Cases decided	No. of cases in which Janmom right allowed	No. of cases rejected	Cases pending
Upto 1-9-77	34,00,000	-	21,00,00	-	-
Upto 31-12-81	36,73,613	36,63,354	24,79,428	11,83,926	19,259
Upto 30-4-82	37,36,936	37,27,863	24,84,431	12,43,432	9,073
Upto 31-12-82	37,45,960	37,34,394	24,97,358	12.37,036	11,566
Upto 31-10-83	37,71,170	37,58,814	25,14,676	12,44,138	12,356

Source : Figures for Col. 1, Oommen (1979 : 9); for 2,3,4 and 5 compiled from the Notes prepared by the Department of Land Revenue, Government of Kerala. The total number of tenants estimated was 25 lakhs.

It is clearly seen that as against the total estimated number of 25 lakh tenancy holdings the total number of applications was nearly one and a half times this number between 1977 and 1983. Receiving, disposal of applications and conferment of ownership of tenants in majority of the cases appears to have been a speedy process. Upto 1977 out of 34,00,000 applications filed nearly two thirds (21,00,000) had been conferred (Janmom) ownership rights. It is also clear

from the table that upto December 31, 1982 the number of tenants conferred Jammom rights did not exceed the estimated 25 lakhs tenancy holdings. Only by October 31, 1983 did the number of tenants conferred ownership rights exceeded this number by 14,676 with 12,356 cases still pending.

2. Purchase of Kudikidappu Rights

The Kudikidappukars (hutment dweller) are mostly labourers and village artisans without any land of their own. They live in the homesteads erected by them on other's land or have been living in huts provided by the land owners with or without liability to pay rent. There have been attempts to evict the Kudikidappukars from their traditional dwelling places. This necessitated protection of these poor hutment dwellers and also their rehabilitation ot ensure them at least a marginal existence. The Kerala Land Reforms Act enables the Kudikidappukars to retain the hutment land in traditional dwelling places and also to purchase land surrounding their hut upto a limit of 3 cents in corporation areas, 5 cents in municipal areas and 10 cents in panchayat areas. The compensation to which the landowner is entitled when purchase is allowed is only 25 per cent of the market value. Of this the Kudikidappukar needs to pay only 50 per cent and the balance 50 per cent is paid by the Government. The Kudikidappukar can pay his share in 12 annual instalments.

After the order of the Land Tribunal concerned has become final it issues a certificate of purchase to the Kudikidappukar.

Total estimated number of Kudikidappukars in Kerala was 4 lakhs. However, even in the case of Kudikidappu tenancy there have been more cases filed than were estimated. But the actual number of cases in which Kudikidappukars were allowed to purchase Kudikidappu right is only 2,76,361.

Table 8.4

Implementation of Purchase of Kudikidappu Rights

Total Estimated	Progress upto	Total filed	Total decided	Total allowed	Total rejected	Pending
4 lakhs	32.12.81	4,44,992	4,40,824	2,72,266	1,68,558	
-do-	30.4.82	4,46,226	4,42,500	2,73,351	1,69,149	3726
-do-	31.12.82	4,48,737	4,45,142	2,74,894	1,70,248	3595
-do-	31.10.83	4,51,107	4,47,807	2,76,361	1,71,446	3300

Source : Compiled from the notes prepared by the Department of Land Revenue, Government of Kerala.

The left parties have been able to organise the Kudikidappukars in favour of their general programme of land reform although what they were to get was not land to cultivate and increase their income but only ownership

right on the homestead they had been living on. One immediate effect was that conferment of ownership on the homestead, although on the basis of nominal payment, symbolised the abolition of the remnants of feudalism. The left parties are satisfied with this reasonably successful programme because they have been responsible to a great extent in providing minimum relief to the hutment dwellers. However, on the whole it is only the tenants of big size holdings who gained the most from the land reforms. Kudikidappu tenants gained the least.

In the case of Kudikidappu rights the total number of applications was nearly 0.5 lakh more than the estimated 4 lakhs by December 1981. However, the total number of Kudikidappukars allowed ownership rights was a little more than half the number of applicants. This number remained almost static till on October 31, 1983. The number of cases in which Kudikidappur rights we allowed as on this date was a little more than 2/3 of the total number of estimated Kudikidappur tenants.

3. Ceiling on Landholdings and Redistribution of Surplus land

The ceiling law in Kerala conforms to the guidelines laid down by the government of India and the Planning Commission, with one major difference. While according to the Government of India pattern as much as 54 acres could be

retained by a family in Kerala no family is entitled to hold more than 20 acres of land in any circumstance. Compared to the ceilings fixed in other states the ceiling fixed in Kerala is the lowest i.e. 10 standard acres for a family consisting of two or more but not more than five members with provision for one acre for every additional member in excess of five subject to the condition that the total will not exceed 20 acres, and 5 standard acres for an adult unmarried person. It can be argued that in the context of the land-man ratio in Kerala where land is distributed in cents the ceiling is not so low as it appears to be. Moreover, what is crucial to a reform is whether the estimated surplus land has been identified, effectively taken over, and distributed.

The unnecessary and unscientific exemptions which tended to defeat the ceiling provisions of the Act have been removed by the Amendment Act of 1969 passed by the CPI(M) led Left and Democratic Front. Exemptions are confined only to very essential cases like lands under plantation crops like lands under plantation crops like tea, rubber, coffee, cocoa, cinnamom and cadamom, private forests, lands held by industrial and commercial undertakings, lands of co-operative societies, public educational, religious and charitable institutions etc. In order to safeguard the interests of

the public at large and to protect the commercial and industrial advancement of the state, the government have the power to exempt any land they consider necessary for the development of commerce industry and plantation. All voluntary transfers of 1963 have been declared null and void for the purpose of ceiling.

Compensation is paid on flat rates. The compensation is far below the market rates. It varies from one hundred to three thousand rupees per acre. A landlord is not eligible to get more than Rs. 2 lakhs as compensation. The compensation is paid in negotiable bonds redeemable after the expiry of 16 years and carrying simple interest at 4½ per cent per annum.

As regards distribution of surplus lands, care has been taken to see that it is distributed to landless agricultural labourers. Specific provisions have also been made in the Act to see that 50 per cent of the land available for distribution is assigned to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. A legal prohibition on alienation for a period of 12 years has also been made in the law, to ensure that the allottees remain on the land for at least a reasonable period. In order to facilitate quick disposal of ceiling cases separate Taluk Land Boards have been constituted for each Taluk consisting of an official chairman

and not less than six non-official members nominated by the Government. These are generally representatives of political parties. There is no role of panchayats. There are cases of land owners being fined Rs. 1000/- and about three hundred cases of such penalities have reported. Taluk Board has been given magisterial power to impose penalities.

The extent of surplus land in the state has been estimated at 1.5 lakh acres. According to the information provided by the Department of Land Revenue out of 69,276 ceiling cases taken on file 67,750 cases have been disposed of as on 1-12-1983 leaving a balance of 1526 cases. The extent of surplus land ordered for surrender is 1,28,202 acres. Of this 83,259 acres have been taken over and 56,109 acres assigned to the agricultural labourers. The assignees consist of 40,897 Scheduled Castes, 54,850 Scheduled Tribes and 52,777 others. Operations of the Act over large parts of the land declared surplus have been stayed by the High Court. Special steps have been taken to vacate the stay orders by constituting a special bench with one or two judges exclusively to do this work and appointing additional government pleaders and one laison officer on special duty from the Land Revenue Department.

Eventhough the Kerala Land Reforms Act is included in the Ninth Schedule of the constitution and is immune from attack on constitutional grounds, revision peititions have been filed in the High Court against the orders of Taluk Land Tribunals on various procedural and other grounds. The delay in the disposal of these revision petitions has, to a great extent, affected the taking over and distribution of surplus lands.

As a result of these and many other constraints the provisions on ceiling on landholdings could not be implemented. Out of the 1.5 lakh acres estimated surplus land only 83,259 acres could be takenover which is less than 2/3 of the target. Compared to the picture related to the tenancy reforms, the performance in regard to ceiling has not been as impressive. However, one main reason for finding very low amount of surplus even within these exemptions of plantation crops. The growth of the area under rubber from 2.71 lakh acres in 1958 to over 5.05 lakh in 1975 points to this loophole in the law. (Oommen, 1979 : 17).

4. Institutional Finance for Beneficiaries

As per the information provided by the Department of Land Revenue, Government Kerala the assignees of surplus land are mostly landless agricultural labourers and a majority of

them are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. They do not have any means to provide the initial dose of input for the cultivation of crops. Further, a large portion of the land taken over for distribution is entirely dry or otherwise in need of development. In such cases land development works like land shaping, land levelling etc. and some soil conservation measures are essential. The Government of India have drawn up a central sector scheme of financial assistance to assignees of surplus land for the development of land for cultivation. As per the existing rules the scale of assistance is Rs. 1000/- per hectare and the entire assistance is in the shape of a grant. A total of Rs. 66,92,440 has been spent under the scheme till the end of March 1983.

Apart from the above, the government have evolved a housing scheme for ex-Kudikidappukars who have been given purchase certificates. The procedure for getting financial assistance under the housing scheme is simple. Altogether a total number of 25,000 houses are proposed to be constructed for the Kudikidappukars under the two housing shcemes now in existence - one though the State Bank of India and the other through the Housing Board. Under the State Bank of India scheme first instalment has been sanctioned in 12,399 cases and second instalment in 12,138 cases while under the

scheme implemented through the Kerala State Housing Board, first instalment has been sanctioned in 7582 cases and second instalment in 4347 cases.

The abolition of tenancy has left thousands of landlords in the state, especially in the districts of Malabar area, in distress. These people who were dependent on rental income suddenly lost their means of livelihood and needed some rehabilitative action on the part of the Government. The meagre compensation due to them was allowed only in instalments. That too did not reach them in time due to procedural delays. These people, mosthly belonging to higher castes, were not used to any other avocation. The framers of the Act had foreseen this contingency and made provisions in section 109 of the Actfor constituting a fund of not less than Rs. 2 crores called the Agricultural Rehabilitation Fund to help these persons. The provision in the Act is to give solatium equal to the compensation due subject to a minimum of Rs. 1500/-. There is also a provision to give them loan and grant for self employment programmes like small scale industries or maintanance of milch animals. This scheme is now under implementation only in Palghat district.

(E) IMPACT OF LAND REFORMS ON THE AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

The agrarian configuration at the time of United Front takeover in 1967 was marked by certain specific features. Oommen (1979 : 3-36) has breifly presented the picture on the eve of 1967. According to him the agrarian situation as obtained in 1966-67 was worse than in 1951 because the Land Reforms Act 1964, unlike the previous Act of 1959 supported the landed interests. The Pattern of land ownership in 1966-67 is given in Table 8.5.

Table 8.5

Districtwise Percentage Distribution of Agrarian Households Classified by Type of Land Relations in Kerala (1966-67)

District	Total	Owner cultivators	Tenants	Kudikidappu	Landlords
Trivandrum	100	88.5	2.0	8.2	1.3
Quilon	100	87.6	4.4	6.2	1.8
Alleppey	100	56.6	14.6	26.7	2.1
Kottayam	100	50.0	34.6	14.1	1.3
Ernakulam	100	35.7	43.5	17.7	3.1
Trichur	100	6.3	73.7	16.6	3.4
Palghat	100	12.5	78.8	6.4	2.3
Kozhikode	100	7.2	86.7	4.0	2.1
Cannanore	100	24.1	58.1	13.9	3.9
STATE	100	40.6	44.9	12.2	2.3

Travancore Region - Triavandrum Quilon, Alleppey and Kottayam; Cochin - Ernakulam and Cochin; Malabar - Palghat, Kozhikode and Cannanore

Source : Oommen, (1979 : 7)

It is clear from the table that 45 per cent of the land in Kerala was under various kinds of tenancies in 1966-67. This may be compared with the figure of 23 per cent in 1951 as per Table 8.1. The Land Reforms Survey of 1966-67 estimated that in wet land areas of the State the incidence of tenance was as high as 64 per cent. The proportion of land under tenancy in 1966-67 ranged from just 2 per cent in Trivandrum district to 87 per cent in Kozhikode (including the present Malappuram district). It was 79 per cent in Palghat and 74 per cent in Trichur district. It clearly reveals the high tenancy rate in Malabar region.

Table 8.6 below illustrates the seriousness of the problem of tenancy in Kerala on the eve of the takeover by the United Front. According to Land Reforms Survey 1966-67 the number of tenant households was 9.76 lakhs. It also shows that tenants with no land of their own in Cochin and Malabar were 95 per cent of the tenants had no land of their own, except their tenanted holdings. (Oommen 1979 : 7).

In a review of the agrarian situation in Kerala on the eve of the United Front Government in 1966-67, Herring points out two important features of land reforms in Kerala. One, the plantation sector is extremely important in Kerala's political economy both in terms of comparison with other states, and in terms of Kerala's export economy which is highly commercialised. As a result the plantation sector

Table 8.6

Tenants Depending Entirely on Leased-in-Land in Kerala (1966-67)

Size of operational (holdings acres)	State		Travancore Region		Cochin Region		Malabar Region	
	No.	Area in acres	No.	Area in acres	No.	Area in acres	No.	Area in acres
Below 1 acre	655619	240971	38197	13359	155486	47746	472026	179866
1 - 2.50	209099	3186692	7329	11080	28196	44530	173574	263082
2.50 - 5.00	76323	257342	1884	6485	10317	37371	64122	214486
5.00 -10.00	25519	168932	1193	6708	7568	46474	16758	115750
10.00-15.00	8075	91957	-	-	1376	14214	6699	77743
15.00-20.00	688	12006	-	-	688	12006	-	-
20.00-25.00	1174	28039	-	-	688	17104	486	10935
25 and above	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	976497	1117939	48603	37632	204319	218445	723665	861862

Source : Oommen (1979 : 8)

has been excluded from land reforms both by the communist and non-communist governments out of the fear of disposal of the trained work force and on grounds of economies of scale. Two, as in Ceylon until 1972, land reforms in Kerala have been confined to the peasant sector which is heavily dependent on paddy, coconut, and tapioca which accounted for 64 per cent of the cropped area in 1966.

The following table compiled by Herring also illustrates the complexity of the agrarian class configuration and the problem of identifying the tillers. The problem in the Kerala land reform related to tenancy is that most of the tillers recognised as beneficiaries are hutment dwellers who leased in housesites from landowners and had far lower income than tenants who leased in land for cultivation. Except one per cent of the hutment dwellers who held land the rest depended solely on agricultural labour.

The category of 'Other tenants', which includes those other than Kudikidappu, are, according to Herring, relatively privileged because their average income is 63 per cent higher than the Kudikidappu and indeed 15 per cent higher than that of owner-cultivators. These tenants also owned 31.7 per cent of the land they operated. Herring also shows that some of these are large operators

Table 8.7

Kerala's Agrarian Structure at the Time of the United Front Take over

Class	Percentage of Land-holding families	Percentage possessing less than one acre	Average Annual Income	Leased in Area as per-centage of oper-ated area	Percentage of class belonging to wealth-iest stratum	Percentage of class belonging to the poorest stratum
Landlords	2.3	1.2	4,039	17.8	18.9	7.4
Owner-cultivator	40.6	65.1	1,601	-	3.0	38.1
Kudikirappu tenants	21.8	71.2	1,137	99.1	1.2	55.7
"Other tenants"	23.1	43.1	1,893	68.3	33.2	43.1
(Total tenants)	(44.9)	(56.7)	(1,526)	(83.3)	(34.4)	(49.2)
Kudikidappukars	12.2	100.0	869	-	-	71.4
All Classes	100.0	59.7	1,526	42.6	2.7	43.9

Wealthiest Stratum includes households reporting annual income greater than Rs. 6000/-; Poorest stratum, those house-holds reporting less than Rs.1000/-

Source : Herring 1983 : 182

in the context of Kerala's agriculture because 15.5 per cent operated more than five acres and these households possessed almost 60 per cent of the area operated by the stratum. A number of them would be termed privileged cultivators in the context of Kerala's agriculture asffewer than 1 per cent held more than 25 acres covering 12 per cent of the land operated by cultivators of this category. Finally, the other tenants' category controlled 95 per cent of the land held by all kinds of tenants in Kerala. (Herring, 1983 : 180-181).

Among the category of landlords also there are complex variations. Although this class constituted only 2.3 per cent of the total land. Twelve per cent of the landlords owned less than one acre and 70 per cent owned less than 10 acres, holding in the aggregate only 12 per cent of the land owned by landlords. Although landlords with 25 acres of more constituted only 13 per cent of the class yet they owned 74 per cent of the land owned by this class. One critical feature of the landlord stratum is that 17.8 per cent of the area operated was leased in by them. Another aspect which highlights the new dimension tenancy has taken in Kerala, as elsewhere in India, is that "leasing in was especially characteristic of top strata; whereas only 6.8 per cent of the smallest landlords leased in land, 45 per

cent of the largest landlords did so.

One of the problems in the Marxist analysis of class differentiation has been to identify the antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions and formulate corresponding strategies. One device that has been adopted in Chinese land reforms programme is participation in the physical labour activity in the fields. However, as Herring notes in Kerala this may pose some problems because here even a half-an-acre landholder employs agricultural labourers to avoid the hard and arduous work in the fields. (Herring, 1980).

Thus on the whole all kinds of tenants small and big would benefit from the law according to this definition. These characteristic features of the tenants have implications for the communist policy logic of land reforms in the context of Kerala. The problem is that of the possibility of embourgeoisement of the privileged, intended beneficiaries. Land Reforms in Kerala could mean vesting of tenanted lands in the lessees, regardless of the class and stratum of the lessee and could result in a large number of agriculturists of relatively high position in the agrarian hierarchy benefiting from the reforms. As Herring points out :

> ".....the concentration of tenants in the smallest holding size category means that the vesting of tenancy rights in tenure holders without any alteration of the size distribution of holdings below the ceiling would leave the bulk of the beneficiaries with

> miniscule holdings and thus in continuing poverty, though unburdened of rental exactions. Land to the tiller as conceptualised by the Government would thus have a class differentiated impact; though the aggregate measure of inequality in landholdings would be reduced, there would be regional variation and the poorest, precisely because their poverty reflected control of very little land, would benefit less than some of the wealthy".(Herring 1983 : 183)

Capitalist agriculture is well entrenched in Kerala's peasant sector. Even on small farms (less than one acre) family labour constitutes less than half of the total labour used. The percentage of employment of hired labour to total labour goes up according to the increase in the size of the operated holding : 47 per cent in the case of smallest size, 76 per cent for farms in the range of 2.5 - 5 acres and 97 per cent in the case of holdings higher than 25 acres thus presenting the difficulty of separating tenants who are victims of feudalism from the tenants who are small scale capitalist operators. The implication this problem has for the anti-feudal strategy of the agrarian programme of the left parties also needs to be clarified.

Another very important point is that the various kinds of tenants form a big chunk of the Kudikidappukars, who hardly own any land apart from hutment land. This section comes under the category of beneficiaries of tenancy reform although the land they secured a meagre.

Agricultural Hbourers were the largest single

occupational category in the state in 1971 and accounted for 30.69 per cent of those employed. The second largest category, the cultivators, constitute 17.8 per cent. Thus the agricultural labourers out numbered the cultivators. Herring argues with Daniel Thorner that given the concentration of land on the one hand and a big chunk of agricultural labourers on the other, a low ceiling would have been a more effective means of redistribution of land than tenancy reform in terms of securing benefits to the actual tillers of the soil.

The problem of the exclusion of agricultural labourers whose number by now must have increased much more from securing tangible benefits has been discussed threadbare by Krishnaji (1979). He is critical of the left parties particularly the CPI(M) whose policy of forging an alliance of all classes from the agricultural labourers up to the rich peasants only resulted in the embourgoisement of the privileged tenants who became reasonably rich landowners.

(F) WHO BENEFITED FROM LAND REFORMS?

One of the important question concerning the consequences of land reforms is the real beneficiaries and what is the class differentiation among them. Whether the poor peasants and the landless poor in Kerala have benefitted or not as a result of land reforms has something to do with the nature of

land reforms policy of left parties and the context in which it was implemented i.e. a bourgeois system in which the intended beneficiaries were not to directly participate in the implementation of the programme. They rather support the parties, particularly the left parties, by voting them into power and also by actively co-operating with the leaders from the local to the state level. But given the fact that the programme as a whole accepts the bourgeois administrative and judicial systems and the fundamental right to property including the hereditary and customary rights of each individual, the overall objectives of the left parties, particuarly benefiting the poor peasants and agricultural labourers whose support they wanted to ensure in the advancement of the revolution, are likely to be nullified in the whole process.

Baming their analysis on the Land Reforms survey 1966-67 and the report of the Bureau of Economics and Statistics Raj and Tarakan (1981) have pointed to the concentration of land in Kerala. They show that although the ownership holdings in the size range of 25 acres and above accounted for only 0.66 per cent of the total number of households who owned land they held over 1 million acres accounting for more than 30 per cent of the total area under ownership holdings. This along with the land owned by temples, families of chieftains and royal households which

would account for 1.1 million acres showed a high level of concentration of land and the corresponding potential surplus land which could be available for distribution. However, as the Land Reforms Survey revealed, large scale alienation through divisions among the family members took place and there was a sharp fall in the number households in the two size groups. The proposed land reforms aiming at redistribution of land could be expected to take place mainly through tenancy reform rather than through ceiling on landholdings. This is illustrated by Raj and Tarakan by sharing that about 0.65 million acres out of a total of 0.80 million acres leased out by households was from ownership holdings in the size group of 25 acres and above. Apart from this there was land under temples, families of chieftains and royal households which was also leased out and ownership on such lands was also to be transferred to tenants. About 1.75 million acres of land was expected to be transferred from the upper strata of society to the lower strata by way of tenancy reforms.

Thus, the landless households in the rural sector amounting to nearly to 0.35 million in 1966-67 could gain from the reforms only to the extent they were occupying homestead land as hutment dwellers which came to a total of only 0.04 million acres. From among the tenant households approximately 1.25 million households stood to gain directly

from the transfer of ownership of leased-in land and nearly 1 million could acquire ownership status.

Out of this 1 million tenants who would acquire ownership status 0.66 million had leased in less than one acre each and could gain only 0.25 million acres. More than 70 per cent of the tenants in this size group were from Malabar. About 0.44 million tenants holding 0.8 million acres of leased-in land in the size group of 1 to 5 acres could also gain. About 0.1 million tenants who leased in 0.85 million acres having operational holdings more than 5 acres in size could gain substantially. However, from within this strata 14,000 households with relatively large sized holdings (about 15 acres) were in a position to increase their ownership holdings from 0.13 million acres to approximately 0.45 million acres.

The proposed reform moreover would be confined mainly to the districts of Malabar and Cochin because of the total area of land leased in, over 1.9 million acres or 86 per cent was in the territory of erstwhile Malabar and Cochin. (Raj and Tarakan, 1981 : 22-26 passim).

In spite of delays, setbacks, and evasions the tenancy reform was a remarkable success in the abolition of landlordism in Kerala. The total number of tenant beneficiaries was

almost 1.3 million which comes to 43.3 per cent of the agricultural households in the state in 1971. The aggregate area transferred through abolition of landlordism was 2 million acres or 36.5 per cent of the net shown area in the state (or 42.9 per cent of the area excluding plantation crops).

Oommen has accounted for the actual changes that took place in the structure of landholdings as a result of land reforms. The table 8.8 and 8.9 illustrate the same.

It is clear from the table that there is a sharp fall in the large holdings from 5.5 per cent in 1953-54 to 0.1 per cent in 1976-77. The medium and small holdings followed the same trend. On the other hand the marginal holdings have increased from 55.6 per cent in 1953-54 to 87.7 per cent in 1976-77.

The corresponding proportion of marginal holdings for India in 1970-71 was 20 per cent of the total holdings and 1.75 per cent of the total area. The owners of the marginal holdings are mostly agricultural labourers and are the most vulnerable section of the society.

The process of change as shown in Table 8.9 in the large and medium size holdings was somewhat different - while there was a sharp fall in both the proportionate number and area of large size holdings the percentage of

Table 8.8

Percentage of Household Operational Holdings in Different Category of Holdings

Size Class	1953-54		1959-60		1970-71		1976-77	
	% of holdings	% of area	% of holdings	% of area	% of holdings	% of area	% of holdings	% of area
Marginal (less than one acre)	55.6	8.1	59.4	11.33	69.9	17.34	87.7	N.A.
Small 1 - 5 acres	32.4	24.7	31.7	30.45	27.3	47.46	8.1	"
Medium 5 - 10 acres	6.5	14.9	5.1	15.69	3.6	20.10	4.1	"
Large Above 10 acres	5.5	52.3	3.8	42.53	1.2	15.10	0.1	"
All Classes	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.00	100.0	

Source : Oommen (1979-12) for 1953-55, 1959-60, and 1970-71 and the notes prepared by the Department of Land Revenue for 1976-77.

Table 8.9

Changes in Average Size of Landholdings in Kerala : 1953-54 to 1976-77

Size Class	1953-54	1959-60	1970-71	1976-77
Marginal Holdings	0.43	0.43	0.31	-
Small Holdings	2.29	2.14	2.12	-
Medium Holdings	6.93	6.89	6.75	-
Large Holdings	39.50	25.60	15.00	-
All Holdings	2.99	2.24	1.22	-

Source : Oommen (1979 :12); Marginal holdings 0-1 acre; small holdings 1-5 acres; Medium holdings 5-10 acres; large holdings above 10 acres.

medium size holdings increased in area but declined in numbers. Oommen attributes these trends to the incluence of ceiling laws, and tenancy reform and intention to circumvent the paddy Procurement Levy Order which provided for compulsory procurement of paddy according to a graded system.

This apart Kerala had the lowest average number of parcels or fragments even in 1960-61; 2.01 parcels per holding as against 5.66 parcels for all India. In course of time this parcellization declined to 1.6 parcels per holding and the average size of the holding increased to 1.01 acres. This shows that there is a hardcore small holder and medium holder sector in Kerala. (Oommen 1979 : 11).

The Department of Land Revenue, Kerala mentions the reasons for continued fragmentation as follows :

> "Apart from the official Land Reforms there has been a large scale alienation of land by big land owners during this period. The militancy of agrarian movement and the threat of official land reforms has accelerated the pace of parallel official land reforms. This has helped to increase the number of families owning or having interest in land".

Table 8.10 gives an idea of the percentage of households who did not own any land and of those who did not own or operate any land in different states of India in 1959-60 and 1970-71; It will be seen that in 1959-60 one third of the rural house holds in Kerala did not own land-the highest proportion among all the states. The percentage of the households neither owning nor operating land also was very high in Kerala. The 1970-71 figures, however, show a significant reduction in the percentage of households neither owning nor operating land in all the states in India. In Kerala the reduction in the landless house holds is much more prominently seen and may be attfibuted mainly to the tenancy reforms which benefited tenant cultivators and nearly 2.5 lakhs Kudikidappukars.

In this context, it may be pointed out that there is one difficulty often overlooked by positivist social science but which has an important bearing on the estimation of the

impact of land reforms. It is generally found that the very fact of land reform, both before and during the reform itself, has the effect of distorting the information supplied in response to surveys, resulting in considerable under-reporting of the area in the realtively larger sized holdings both ownership and operational holdings. The main reasons for underreporting, as the Bureau of Economics and Statistics puts it, are :

> "1) The legislation imposing ceilings on landholdings had led to large scale partitions in families and the land belonging to a family might be operated as a single unit for all practical purposes. Thus only the land belonging to the head of the family would be reported as the total holding area.
>
> 2) If a member of a household operated land of others who were residing away from the household, the details of the land belonging to such persons might not be reported by the household members.
>
> 3) Apart of the effect of land reform, evasion of food procurement on compulsory basis according to a graded system resulted in underreporting".
> (Raj and Tarakan, 1981 : 26-27)

The table 8.11 shows that the number of ownership household was significantly higher in 1971-72 than earlier. Thus, in 1971-72 there were about 0.4 millions more such households as compared to 1961-62 when only the rural sector is taken into or about one million more as compared to 1966-67 when both the rural and urban sectors are taken together. The increase is largely accounted for by holdings

Table 8.11

Present changes that took Place in the Household Ownership Holdings in Kerala Between 1961-62 and 1971-72

Size-class of ownership holdings (in acres	Rural Sector				Rural & Urban Sectors			
	No. of house-holds (000)		Area (000) (millions)		No. of house-holds (000)		Area (000 millions)	
	1971-62	1971-72	1961-62	1971-72	1966-67	1971-72	1966-67	1971-72
0.01-0.99	1034 (60.1)	1437 (67.1)	384 (12.3)	449 (16.8)	903 (60.0)	1805 (70.4)	348 (10.2)	514 (17.7)
1.00-4.99	552 (32.1)	605 (28.2)	1203 (38.3)	1292 (48.4)	472 (31.4)	646 (25.2)	991 (29.2)	1382 (47.6)
5.00-24.99	130 (7.6)	99 (4.6)	1128 (36.0)	851 (31.9)	119 (7.8)	111 (4.3)	1036 (32.4)	931 (32.1)
25.00 and above	6 (0.3)	2 (0.1)	423 (13.5)	79 (3.0)	10 (0.7)	2 (0.1)	1021 (30.1)	79 (2.7)
0.01 and above	1722 (100.0)	2143 (100.0)	3138 (100.0)	2670 (100.0)	1504 (100.0)	2564 (100.0)	3396 (100.00)	2904 (100.0)
Total net cropped area	-	-	N.A.	N.A.	-	-	4724	5407
Area under ownership holding as % of N.C.A.	-	-	-	-	-	-	71.9	53.7

Note : Figures in parentheses represent percentages

Source : Raj and Tharakan (1981 : 28)

below one acre since more than 95 per cent of the additional households with ownership holdings in the rural sector and 85 per cent in the rural and urban sectors belong to this category. Part of the increase is to be found also among holdings of 1-5 acres in size. The number of households with holdings above 5 acres was lower in 1971-72 than before.

The area of ownership in the two lower size classes i.e. below one acre and 1 to 5 acres also went up by 0.5 million acres in the rural and urban sector during the period 1966-67 to 1971-72. The increase in area was much greater in the case of the 1-5 acre size class than in that of the immediately lower size class. This trend corresponds with the sharp fall in the area of higher size classes particularly in the holdings of 25 acres and over.

The data clearly show that between 1961-62 and 1971-72 the households that gained in number belonged mostly to the size class of holdings below one acres, but additional area gained by them was relatively small. The increase in the number of ownership holdings of 1 to 5 acres in size increased much less but their gain in terms of area was much more particularly when households in the urban sector are also counted in.

(G) IMPACT OF LAND REFORMS ON PRODUCTION, PRODUCTIVITY, AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS AND REAL WAGES

In this section we will see what impact these changes in the structure of landholdings and pattern of distribution of land have on production, productivity and demand for labour and overall agricultural development on the one hand and income and standards of life and poverty on the other. Raj and Tharakan (1981), Pillai (1982), Herring (1983) and Jose (1984) have dealt with these questions in relation to the impact of land reforms in Kerala.

1. Production and Productivity

Pillai (1982) has made a specific study of the growth of agricultural output in Kerala with specific reference to food crops and non-food crops. He concluded that till the early sixties the agricultural sector dominated the state economy as it had a larger share in the total State Domestic Product. Whereas the share of agriculture in SDP was 53.4 per cent in 1960-61 it came down to 47.8 per cent in 1970-71 and 41.8 per cent in 1976-77. The extensive phase of agricultural growth in Kerala was over by sixties and at the same time the rate of increase in the intensity of cropping decelerated since 1970-71. A shift in the pattern of cropping from non-plantation and food crops to

plantation crops is prominently seen. Although Pillai notes that this is a welcome feature, it can be argued that the motive behind the shift is more in the nature of avoiding labour intensive crops rather than any progressive and enterprising tendency on the part of the cultivators. In the context of strong agricultural labour movement and growing labour costs, food crops prove to be of no benefit to the cultivator. Talking about the trends in the rate of growth of agricultural output, Pillai says :

> "Starting from a moderate rate of growth of 2.758 per cent per annum between 1952-53 to 1960-61 it moved up to 4.365 per cent per annum during the next period from 1960-61 to 1970-71 then declined to 1.866 per cent in the subsequent period from 1970-71 to 1974-75 and registered a negative growth of 2.992 per cent annum since 1974-75. Thus the period from 1960-61 to 1970-71 could be identified as a period of accelerated growth in Kerala's agriculture and the period from 1974-75 as a period of decline". (Pillai 1982, 49).

Compared to the all-India growth rates of agricultural production the growth rate in the fifties was higher in India (3.3 per cent) than in Kerala (2.8 per cent). However, in the sixties it was higher in Kerala (4.4 per cent) compared to all India (2.3 per cent).

Further, while the rise in agricultural production accelerated in India during the seventies in Kerala it rose sharply during the sixties but declined during the seventies. Pillai points to a very crucial difference between the state agriculture compared to the Indian situation :

> "It is true that Kerala's agriculture witnessed during the sixties much higher growth rates in area as well as output, but not in productivity, than those witnessed by Indian agriculture during the well known post-Green Revolution period, 1964-65 to 1977-78. The growth of productivity in Kerala's agriculture, however always lagged behind that in Indian agriculture. Thus, inspite of the well known and accepted fact that arable land is limited in Kerala and that the only way to increase production is to concentrate on productivity, it seems that such a strategy has not been seriously followed in Kerala so far".

Relating agricultural production to the impact of land reforms Raj and Tarakan point out :

> "Until the 1970s the area under cultivation as well the output of crops were growing at a reasonably rapid rate; consequently, there was an increase of nearly 25 per cent in the gross income from land (estimated at constant prices) between 1960-64 and 1970-71. Thereafter there has been no increase in either net or gross sown area". (Raj and Tarakan 1981 : 42).

This means that land reforms brought in new land under cultivation and resulted in increased agricultural production. As the above authors clarify the decline in the rate of growth of output in agriculture after 1970-71 was due to non-availability of land for further extension of cultivation even in the northern districts adverse climatic conditions and fall in the prices of paddy. Further, though the agricultural output as a whole rose at a slower rate since 1970-71 and declined since 1974-75, the real income from agriculture in Kerala was higher at the end of the seventies

than at the beginning due to increase in the price of export crops. On the whole there has been an improvement in terms of trade which along with foreign remittances from the migrants has led to prosperity on a moderate scale. However, the authors caution that "this cannot last very long unless the opportunity is used for strengthening the tehhnological basis for more agricultural growth in the future : the land reforms that have been implemented provide a sound institutional framework for such strengthening but cannot obviously be a substitute for it" (Ibid : 46).

It is clear from the above arguments thal land reforms in Kerala, particularly the tenancy reforms that were successfully implemented, have resulted in higher production and productivity at least in the initial decade. Whatever are the reasons in other states for production and productivity to increase, in Kerala because of the successful implementation of tenancy reforms tenants were freed from rental burden and inhibition in long run investments in agriculture on capitalist lines. It is not far off the mark to say that the implementation of ceiling laws which resulted in further redistribution of land although in a limited sense resulted in lowering the concentration of land.

(H) IMPACT ON THE REAL WAGES AND INCOME OF THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS

Land reform on the whole results in a more productive and intensive cultivation and utilization of land, which in turn results in the rise in the demand for agricultural labour. A related possibility is increase in the wages corresponding to the rise in the productivity on land, accruing to the agricultural labourers.

A more crucial issue, I aggue, is also involved here for the left parties. Within the national level policy logic of land reform, which the left parties have chosen to work out, issues for mobilization of the landless labourers and small peasants other than reasonable wages for agricultural wage, have been exhausted. At the same time the electoral strategies cannot ignofe this large section of the population. The problems inherent in further redistribution of land to satisfy the landless are ridden withrisks of disaffiliation of the land-owners of all types as also of losing legitimacy of the parliamentary communist model as it works in the existing framework. If at all the left parties are still in favour of land redistribution, it has only a limited potential.

Thus, the reduced scope for securing land to the agricultural labourers, electoral strategies and many other

factors have led the left parties to concentrate on the enactment and implementation of the reasonable minimum wage laws for agricultural labourers.

Added to these general problems are problems related to the specific situation in Kerala where the man-land ratio is very high. Historically, there has been a high incidence of agricultural labourers. Around 1911 the number of agricultural labourers was only 0.75 millions and it did not go up till 1931. The increase occurred after 1931 particularly from 1953 to 1971. In 1971 it was around two million (Raj and Tarakan 1981 : 33). Raj and Tarakan have specifically stated that, "with such rapid growth in the supply of rural labour one would expect considerable downward pressure on wages unless there was corresponding increase in the demand for such labour for agriculture and related activities. The movement in rural wage rates in Kerala since the middle of the 1950s doesn't, however, indicate any such pressure; unlike in most other states of India there has been some increase even in real terms. The real wage rate of male field labourers is estimated to have risen up by more than 50 per cent between 1956-57 and 1971-72: there has been some further rise since then" (Ibid : 34).

According to Raj and Tharakan, two factors that have resulted in the rise in the wage rates of agricultural

labourers in Kerala are the rise in productivity of land during the period and the emergence and effective organisation of agricultural labourers. The growth and strength of trade unionism among agricultural labourers has also been attributed to the support, both legislative and administrative, given by successive governments. Jose (1984) has dealt with the increase in agricultural wage rates in various states including Kerala between 1964-65 and 1974-75 as can be seen from table 8.12.

It will be seen that between the reference years the real wage rates of male agricultural labour declined in many states of India except in Punjab, Uttar Prades, Jammu and Kashmir and Karnataka. In Kerala there was only a one per cent decline while the average rate of decline in India as a whole was 12 per cent. In the case of female agricultural labourers where as only two other states, i.e., Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh reported some increase in the real wage rates, Kerala recorded a 20 per cent increase. Table 8.13 below illustrates the above trends. The table presents data on yearly increase in average wage rates of agricultural labourers (men only) in the State during the periods 1961-62 to 1980-81. Jose has deflated the indices of increase in money wage rates by the corresponding indices of Consumer Price Index Numbers for agricultural labourers in Kerala and derived

Table 8.12

Money Wage Rates of Agricultural Labourers in 1964-65 and 1974-75 and Increase/ Decrease in Real Wage Rates Between the Two Years in Different States, India

States	1964/65		1974/75		1964/65 to 1974/75	
	Money wage rates in Rupees per day		Money wage rates in Rupees per day		Increase in real wage rates 1964/65 = 100	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Andhra Pradesh	1.21	0.85	2.65	1.96	85	90
2. Assam	2.21	1.70	4.04	3.07	70	69
3. Bihar	1.39	1.20	3.22	2.74	88	87
4. Gujarat	1.47	1.19	3.24	2.52	92	88
5. Haryana	-	-	4.85	3.95	-	-
6. Himachal Pradesh	-	-	5.07	3.29	-	-
7. Jammu & Kashmi	1.93	1.50	5.29	3.72	108	98
8. Karnataka	1.21	0.97	2.85	1.81	100	97
9. Kerala	2.11	1.23	6.02	4.28	99	120
10. Madhya Pradesh	1.11	0.86	2.46	2.73	74	106
11. Maharashtra	1.47	0.77	2.63	1.53	74	83
12. Orissa	1.33	0.89	2.64	1.83	71	74
13. Punjab	2.13*	1.45*	6.42	3.41	124	97
14. Rajasthan	1.76	1.09	3.64	2.58	74	85
15. Tamil Nadu	1.39	0.85	3.64	2.32	89	93
16. Uttar Pradesh	1.10	0.93	3.19	2.47	126	116
17. West Bengal	1.81	1.36	3.49	2.83	77	84
INDIA	1.43	0.95	3.24	2.27	88	93

Note : *Average wage rates for Punjab and Haryana
Source : A. V. Jose, 1984 : 128

the index numbers of real wage rates also presented in the table.

Table 8.13

Rends in Agricultural Wage Rates (Wage Rates of Paddy Field Labour - Men) 1961/62 to 1980/81, Kerala

Year	Average Money Rates (Rs. per day)	Indices of Increase in Money Wage Rates (1961/62 = 100)	Consumer Price No. for Agri. Labourers (1961/62 =100)	Indices of Increase in Real Wage Rates (1961/62 =100)
1	2	3	4	5
1961/62	2.14	100	100	100
1962/63	2.37	111	101	110
1963/64	2.40	112	104	108
1964/65	2.76	129	124	104
1965/66	3.09	144	141	102
1966/67	3.60	168	151	111
1967/68	4.40	206	161	128
1968/69	4.57	214	184	116
1969/70	4.75	222	201	117
1970/71	4.81	225	190	112
1971/72	5.13	240	198	121
1972/73	5.47	256	207	124
1973/74	6.39	299	259	115
1974/75	7.67	358	360	99
1975/76	7.64	357	344	104
1976/77	8.02	375	306	123
1977/78	8.22	384	298	129
1978/79	8.47	396	304	130
1979/80	10.23	478	324	147
1980/81	12.16	568	356	160

Source : A. V. Jose, 1984 : 130

It can be seen from the table that ever since 1961-62 there has been a perceptible increase in real wage rates of male agricultural labourers in Kerala. It will also be seen that the real wage decreased during 1974-75 quite significantly. This happened because of a rise in the consumer price index. However, after registering a 260 per cent increase over the base year in 1974-75, the consumer price index number actually slided down during the three succeeding years. We also note that since 1974-75, the real wage rates have been consistently rising in Kerala and that by 1980-81 they registered a 60 per cent increase over the rate in 1964-65. (Jose 1984 : 129).

However, the picture is not all that good for the agricultural labourers particularly given the reaction of the landowners to the increasing wage rates in Kerala. This is reflected in their efforts to change the cropping pattern from labour intensive to non-labour intensive crops - from paddy to coconut and some other crops. As a result, although real wage rates have increased, the number of days of work available for the workers has declined. This is one issue where no government has any control. However strong may be the movement of agricultural labourers it cannot exercise control over this situation if the landowners leave the lands uncultivated or convert them into house construction plots which is also the

emerging trend in Kerala. Strong trade union movement in certain areas can only counteract this to a certain extent. The table 8.14 shows a sharp decline in the average number of days of employment per year since 1950-51 (except between 1956-57 and 1964-65. Agricultural employment declined from an average of 170 days per year in 1950-51 to 156 in 1956-57. It rose to 173 in 1964-65 and then declined sharply to 138 in 1974-75. Non-agricultural declined consistently from 25 to 12 days during the same period. The trend in the decline of total employment was similar to that of agricultural employment.

Table 8.14

Average Annual Days of Wage Employment of Men Agricultural Labourers Belonging to Agricultural Labour Households

Years	Agricultural Employment	Non-agricultural Employment	Total Employment
1950-51	170	25	195
1956-57	156	14	170
1964-65	173	14	187
1974-75	138	12	150

Source : Raj and Tarakan, 1981 :39

Given the slow process of industrialization the absorption of farm labour into industrial sector is meagre. There is increasing competition among the agricultural labourers for work which also leads to inter-union rivalry.

In some areas the trade unions do not allow the landowners to leave the lands uncultivated. However, it appears that no amount of trade union activity or support from government will solve such problems. The only redeeming feature is the work in the plantation sector as also toddy tapping which provides constant work but not to many. Thus much cannot be said about the rise in the annual income of the agricultural labourers on account of rise in the real wages.

It is difficult to say what issues can be formulated for mobilisation of the agricultural labourers in the context of exhaustion of land issue and wage issue. In fact the struggle for high wage has also antagonised the peasants, particularly the middle and large farmers.

The only issue which has relevance to the present context is the price issue. It can sustain the support of all those farmers who produce surplus for the market; but it does not benefit the numerous small and marginal holders and agricultural labourers. Moreover, all parties, more or less being in favour of remunerative prices have stolen the show and there is not much which the left parties can get out of the price issue. It looks as if the situation has reached an impasse that brings the limitations of the communist policy logic of land reforms

to the fore. The loss of electoral support on the part of CPI, and the dwindling support of the CPI(M) revealed in recent years may be atributed to the above developments in the agrarian sector.

Footnotes

1. In Lieten's analysis, "the allottment of small plots to the rural workers proved to be in the interests of the parasitic classes" Lieten (1982 : 68), and this bonded ownership prevailed throughout Kerala. Lieten wants to refer them to as one type of agricultural proletariat much in line with what Lenin did for Russia. Because, the border line between the agricultural labourers and the dwarf peasantry (constituting nearly 60 per cent of the total land owners) is amorphous. Lenin in his Development of Capitalism in Russia concluded that infact this ownership of small plots does not prevent economists from classifying them as a type of agricultural proletariat (Ibid : 68)

2. Situation has not changed much since Gupta wrote. In my field observation what struck me most is that such tendencies are not just remanants but are dominant. In the hotels, except a few in the city customers have ot themselves dispose off the leaves in which the food and snaks are served. The Sri Narayana Guruswamy cult and the Aiyappa cult are emerging as strong challenges to class based social polarisation and development of communist consciousness. In spite of all the efforts of the CPI there is little erosion of these tendencies because some thing is lacking at some level or the other. On the political plane it appeared to me that trade unions of all kinds of workers are so well organised that there are few trades and concerns which are not covered by one trade union or the other. But glaringly there is a dicotomy or dual loyalty in terms of there consciousness. The economistic and trade union consciousness which is imparted by the unions and communist political parties and which they got out of struggles does not come in the way of their loyalty to the cults mentioned above.

This I argue restricts the realization of the long run goals of socialist revolution although it serves the purpose of electoral victories of the communists and formation of governments by them.

CHAPTER - IX

POLITICS OF LAND REFORMS UNDER UNITED FRONT AND LEFT FRONT GOVERNMENTS IN WEST BENGAL

With the completion of eight years in government by the left parties in West Bengal the phenomenon of the politics parliamentary left reaches its logical end. With its rich political history evolved during the long period of colonial political domination and successive Congress, United Front and left front Governments on the one hand and an established tradition of struggle against oppression and exploitation. West Bengal is in many respects, unique among the states of the Indian Union. One question that has been crucial and central in this chequered history of West Bengal is that of land.

The character of governments formed at the state level in the post, colonial period and the character of left politics has to be understood from this point of view in addition to the specific geographical features that have conditioned the evolution of land tenures and land reforms. This will enable us to distinguish the left alternative to the Congress as also to see what opportunities the land

situation provides for revolutionary alternatives which the left parties may or may not have taken advantage of other words it will enable us to understand whether the performance of the left on the land front has served their own longrun purpose or that of the bourgeoisie.

These issues can be discussed in relation to the performance of left parties in West Bengal much more fruitfully than in Kerala. Although the left parties are equally strong in Kerala, yet because of various specificities like the strong influence of caste and religious forces, they have taken a different course there and have been moulded to these specificities.

On the other hand in West Bengal political polarisation has taken place in a less complicated socio-cultural situation and the politics of left parties is easier analyse. In addition to having evolved into a dominant force in the civil society the left parties have come to power and have governed the state for a considerable period of time i.e. during 1967-69, 1970-71 and more importantly from 1977 till to-day. Further, land reforms and agrarian problems have been crucial to their overall strategies while in power. Thus, the analysis of the land reforms policy and agrarian change that have taken place during the period will enable us to evaluate the

performance of left parties in terms of questions relevant to the present study.

(A) THE PRE-INDEPENDENCE AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

The agrarian structure in India which the Marxists consider the source of many problems including productivity, production correlation forces conflict, and struggles can be traced to the changes the Britishers introduced in accordance with their overall interests. Whether their policy on land is a legacy of confusion of attitude and approach in resolving the problems arising out of the existence of private property which they technically transposed to the Indian situation (N. Bandyopadhyaya, 1982) or the problems originated only because of lack of commitment to agricultural development irrespective of the propriety of this transposition, the policy on the whole served the British and played a reactionary role in the overall development of India. This is illustrated by the changes that the British made from time to time starting from 1765 when the East India Company acquired rights of Dewani our Bengal, Bihar and Orissa (the then Bengal Presidency) to the introduction of permanent settlement in 1793 which ensured the collection of revenue. By settling the relative rights between zamindars and the state. All

subsequent Acts were only intended to solve the problems that emerged, within the overarching framework of the Permanent Settlement which basically left land management and agriculture to the free sway of zamindars (Bandyopadhyaya, 1984 :2). This freedom only led, as Bandyopadhyaya notes, to two main problems :

> "By the 1930s the relationship of interests in land and its complications thereby started manifesting themselves in two different categories though often interecting and interpenetrating with one another. One was the proliferation of intermediary rights growing between the permanent and semipermanent tenants (raiyats) and the zamindars essentially (intermediaries), interests sharing revenue collection rights of different degrees. The other was the breeding layers of interests between the raiyats and the ultimate tiller of the land" (Bandyopadhyaya 1982 : 54).

Bandyopadhyaya notes further that because of this differentiation of interests, simultaneous tiering of intermediary interests and cultivating interests the demand for Land Reforms Often meant different things to different classes. These two meanings very broadly were : the Congress party advocated the abolition of intermediaries while the growing left and radical movement emphasised the rights of the sub-tenants and the actual tillers.

The basic landed interests and contradictions in British Bengal, were : 1. The legal form of land relations in Bengal created two sets of rights over land i.e. right to proprietorship and right to occupation. The entire structure of the zamindari and tenure-holding property

associated with the right to proprietorship witnessed continuous fragmentation and disintegrated by the end of 1920s. 2. What the emergence of commercial crops as profitable to cultivate, the dominant tendency of agricultural wealth-making was in the direction of extensive rent exploitation and of usury completed with the trade in rice and jute. The incidence of exploitation in the form of rent was based on the rights of occupation rather than proprietorship.

There were increasing tendencies of differentiation within the peasantry, marked by emergence of big peasantry on the one hand and immizerisation of the poor peasantry on the other. Because of indebtedness poor peasants were losing land to the rich, although poor peasants continued to cultivate the land with inferior rights and were subject to eviction. Various forms of unfree labour became more persistent and weakened the bargaining power of the poor and landless peasants vis-a-vis the landlords whether proprietors, tenureholders or superior raiyats.

These tendencies were stronger in the South-Western and Northern districts of Bengal and not so in the Eastern districts. In the Eastern districts, because of various favourable ecological factors, the small peasantry still had a relatively viable economic status. As a result in the

Western and Northern districts there emerged among landlords-proprietors, tenureholders or superior raiyats - a common interest in subjugating the poor or landless working peasantry. In the Eastern districts a strong sustaining mass of small peasantry had a stronger basis to unite against exactions by zamindars and tenure holders. This attained an organised political character by the end of 1930s.

Chatterjee also discussed how the above tendencies were conditioned by the colonial framework. The initial pressure of revenue, deindustrialisation and the consequent pressure on land, lack of non-agricultural avenues of investment, absence of a growing demand for labour from the industrial sector - all created the conditions for the break up of zamindari property and for the growth of sub-infeudation, rackrenting and usury as the prodominant modes of enrichment.[1] These developments imposed a contradiction in official policy whereby unfettered rights of private property were instituted on the one hand and a tendency to encourage small-peasant economy become strong, on the other permanancy of the proprietory rights of the zamindars was still held high. At the same time there was the persistence of concern to protect the raiyat's right to cultivate. These contradictions were reflected very much in the debates on the Bengal Tenancy Act (Amendment) Bill.

Chattergee summarises the evolution of agrarian

structure in Bengal into five salient features :

1. Disintegration of the zamindari class with proprietory rights in the face of an old contradiction with the mass or the peasantry and a new contradiction with a rich peasant-money lender-trader class.

2. An emerging rich peasant-moneylender-trader class, challenging the erstwhile dominance of the landed proprietor seeking greater and greater control over the land and the produce of the peasantry.

3. A large and growing poor peasant-sharecropper labour class formed out of the disintegration of the small-peasant production.

4. The colonial government seeking to benefit out of its expanded appropriation from the agrarian sector while at the same time trying to servive in the face of a major political challenge by intervening in the process of production and the evolving class struggle within the social formation.

5. A later development to be added to this list was the emergence of a middle class intelligentia-formed out of the ranks of the declining rentier classes having to play an independent role in the politics of Bengal. Chattergee (1985 : 60-62).

These tendencies in the evolution of the agrarian structure of Bengal had their bearing on the politics of Bengal till the end of colonial rule.

Two important pieces of landreforms enacted in the second half of the century are the Rent Act of 1959 and Tenancy Act of 1885.

The Rent Act of 1859 was intended to set right the relations between the landlords and their tenants mainly by restricting the powers of the landlords to enhance rents and also clearly defining the rights of the raiyats/tenants particularly to sublet lands. But on the whole the Act favoured the zamindars overlooked the interests of the sub-tenants and sharetenants who leased in from the occupancy raiyats.

The Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885 was an amendment to the Rent Act of 1859. It "more elaborately categorised the tenants, provided for incidence of different categories of tenants and their liabilities, put restrictions on arbitrary enhancement of rents and provided for special provisions regarding the rights of the settled raiyats.... The Act also, for the first time provided for the preparation of record of rights and settlement of land revenue" (Bandyopadhyaya, 1984 : 4).

The chief defects of the earlier Act which left a gap in regard to interests of the actual cultivators in terms of their legal rights was not rectified. This problem which remained as a feudal remnant till recently and took the form of jotedars vs. bargadars problem.

Till the Tebhaga movement of 1946 there was no significant uprising of the bargadars demanding improvement

in their conditions. Bergman (1984) gives an account of the peasant movements particularly those in which the share-croppers participated. The Provincial Kisan Sabha organised the sharecroppers, who in spite large number were difficult to organises. Because of their dependence on the jotedars and the occupancy landowners, and insecurity of tenure they were inhibited from responding to the call of the Kisan Sabha. However, the Sabha gave a call for demanding an increase in share of the bargadar from 50 per cent to 66 per cent (Tebhaga) which became the Central Slogan Sabha in all its struggles since then. The Bengal Famine of 1943 created a crisis in the rural economy and also acted as a catalyst in the cultivators forcibly took the whole produce to their homes without sharing with the jotedars; the village youth demonstrated and took out processions in the village around with bamboo lathis. Both Muslims and Hindus participated in the whole of West Bengal. The Tebhaga movement provided the political atmosphere for the enactment of the West Bengal Bargadars Act, 1950 after independence. In the history of peasants movements in India the Tebhaga movement is compared with the Telangana armed struggle of the peasantry which moved even the central government of India to send the army and suppress it. After the withdrawal of the armed struggle, the Hyderabad Government enacted the Hyderabad Tenancy and

Agricultural Lands Act 1950 which provided for certain rights to the cultivating tenants. But in the absence of the required political atmosphere in the subsequent years and because of the resistence of landlords on constitutional grounds the Act has not been properly implemented (Eashwaraiah, (1985).

In the same way the West Bengal Bargadars' Act 1950 provided certain rights to the Bargadars to improve their condition. The most important of those laid-down : "If the landowner supplied draft-animals, agricultural implements and manure, he was entitled to one half of the harvest; otherwise the sharecropper retains two-thirds. Seed supplied by the landowner should be returned to him after the harvest". But the Act was not entirely favourable to the sharecroppers although it, for the first time, recognised the rights of the bargadars and laid the foundation for future initiatives both on the part of the parties which came to power and the Provincial Kisan Sabha. Partha Chatterjee (1984 : 203-207) has given an account of the nature of anti-colonial and anti-feudal struggles and the problem of building organisations of poor-peasant share-cropper demands. The contribution of Tebhaga movement was that brought the problem of land relations to the fore. The West Bengal Bargadars Act 1950, however, failed to solve the problem of bargadars, as it recurred again and

again and is central to the land reforms policy in West Bengal even to-day.

(B) THE AGRARIAN SITUATION ON THE EVE OF THE INDEPENDENCE

On the eve of independence the salient features of the agrarian structure in West Bengal and its problems were :

There were zamindars at the apex and a rackrented peasantry at the bottom. There were many layers of intermediaries between these two categories. Whereas the zamindar was an absentee owner the jotdars were at the top and held large blocks of land with full occupancy rights. They always cultivated lands by hired agricultural labourers. Along with this type of cultivation they took to money lending and trading. In 1953 out of the total cultivated area of 11,700,000 acres, intermediaries held about 400,000 acres, raiyats (jotdars) 10,500,000 acres and under-raiyats (occupancy tenants enjoying transferable and heritable rights) 800,000, acres. Bargadars (known differently in different places as adhihars, or bhagidars, or bagchasis were at the bottom rung and cultivated as much as 20.3 per cent of the total cultivated land. In Some places like 24 parganas and Hoogly, area under sharecropping went upto 41 per cent. (D. Thorner, 1976 : Ghosh and Nagraj, 1978 : 51-52). Sunil Sengupta (1981) presents a detailed picture of the agrarian

structure in the pre-reform West Bengal. The table below presents the specific features of the situation as compared to the all India situation in 1953-54.

Table 9.1

Agrarian Structure of West Bengal and India : 1953-1954

Size class of Holdings (acres)	West Bengal		India	
	% of holdings	% of area	% of holdings	% of area
Less than 5	34.00	-	16.00	-
Over 15	2.60	26.00	10.00	52.51
Over 25	0.70	11.20	1.60	36.70
Over 50	0.01	2.00	1.00	17.54
Average area of holdings (acres)	3.01		6.25	
% utilization of total geographical area	66.00		45.50	

Source : Compiled from Sunil Sengupta (1981 : A70-A71).

It is clear from the table that whereas landholdings in West Bengal were marked by predominance of smaller size holdings, much lower average size of holdings and fewer of big landholdings in the country as a whole it was vice versa. Whereas 66 per cent of the entired geographical area was cultivated in West Bengal, cultivation

covered only 44.5 per cent of the geographical area of the country. At the other extreme there was a high concentration of marginal holdings and small farms (34 per cent being below 5 acres) in West Bengal. In the country as a whole there was concentration of big landowners and landlords having land above 50 acres.

Further, Sengupta also points out that the incidence of share-cropping and proportion of agricultural labourers was quite high in West Bengal. Moreover, in 1950-51 in West Bengal 24 per cent of the population was in urban areas as against 17.35 per cent in India.

Sengupta opines that all these specificies of West Bengal reflected a certain relation of forces that were different from India. In addition to this the partition of Bengal brought about problems like demographic pressure and higher growth of population. Between 1951 and 1961 whereas India's population grew by 21.5 per cent the growth rate of population in West Bengal was 32.8 per cent partition of Bengal heralded certain deep socio-economic changes in the state which had something to do with radical land reforms : As Sengupta writes :

> "In what emerged as East Pakistan which along with West Bengal formed the major seat of Permanent Settlement of 1793, abolition of intermediaries (zamindars) was effected under a communal banner with the Hindu middle class (who held the large portion of the intermediary

> interests, mostly turned petty through sub-infeudation and subdivision) coming over to West Bengal. From within West Bengal itself an urban middle class of Calcutta growingly delinked from the rural landed interests had emerged over the last one-and-a-half century.... on the other hand, there was a continuously increasing pressure on land which came from the lesser fortunate categories of refuges - the artisans, cultivators, fishermen and the like" (Sengupta 1981A : 71).

The Hindu middle class from East Bengal which, relieved of landed interests, became an articulate class in the socio-economic and political life of West Bengal provided an atmosphere condusive to the formulation and implementation of land reforms in West Bengal under the Congress regime starting with the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act 1953.

(C) LAND REFORMS POLICY AND LEGISLATION UNDER SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS

The main land reforms legislation in the post-independence period viz. The Bargadari Act of 1950, failed to protect the interests of the bargadars mainly because it did not provide-security of tenure, there was no provision for recording of rights and obligations of the landowners and the tenant, and there was no possibility of making the bargadars owners of the lands they cultivated in spite of their long standing as tenants.

The Bengal Land Revenue Commission, popularly known as the Floud Commission of 1940 reported the conditions of the bargadars and made certain recommendations. Of particular importance is the recommendation that the bargadars working on the lands of tenure holders i.e. zamindars and other superior interests should be granted the status of "under-raiyats" or protected tenants. However, no provision to this effect was provided in the Bargadari Act 1950. As Daniel Thorner (1976) writes : "... the post-independence legislation explicitly failed in 1950 to implement the recommendations of the commission appointed in 1940 under the auspices of the old regime. The specific provisions of the Act are inconsequential, if not retrogale, as compared, say, with sections of the Bombay Tenancy Act of 1948 which deal with cropsharing" (Thorner, 1976 : 34).

As a result the central problem of the rural economy of West Bengal that stemmed out of the relations between the contending landed interests i.e. raiyats jotdars, and zamindars on the one hand and various kinds of direct cultivators without any rights on laid on the other remained unsolved.

1. <u>Abolition of Landlordism and Amelioration of the Condition of Actual Tillers</u>.

The first comprehensive law to deal with the basic

structural problems arising out of the colonial land laws was the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act of 1953 (WBEAA).

The Act of 1953 aimed at the elimination of the interests of zamindars and other intermediary interests by state acquisition on payment of compensation. It fixed a ceiling on the land holdings and brought intermediary holders under the direct control of the state to be treated hence-forth as tenants in respect of their holdings below the ceiling. The ceiling fixed was 25 acres on the khas possession of agricultural land the intermediaries were allowed to retain 20 acres of non-agricultural and homestead land. There was no restriction on the possession of land under plantations, archards and tankfisheries which was a crucial limitation, of land reforms as in Kerala. The Act also provided for the acquisition of zamindari interests in mines, minerals, markets, forests and fisheries. The original Act was amended in 1955 when a provision for ceiling on individual holdings of all large owners was incorporated.

This Act, however, was not implemented thoroughly because on the one hand the landowners and the intermediaries stalled its effective implementation and on the other the government did not take effective steps to prevent its obstruction. By the time the government of West Bengal

passed this Act and prepared the necessary records in accordance with the rules laid down by the Revisionary Settlement of 1956, the experience of the failure of similar legislation in the neighbouring state of Bihar adversely influenced the process of implementation in West Bengal.

In 1956 Daniel Thorner made an important survey of the implementation of land reforms and agrarian change in various states of India. He included West Bengal in the Areas of Least Change along with Rajasthan, Bihar, Orissa, Tranvancore Cochin etc. and pointed out that taking advantage of the loppholes in the law, the zamindars enlarged their Sir and Khudkasht lands as hastily as possible by evicting the tenants. The government reacted to this in a half-hearted way only by passing a preventive ordinance.(Thorner, 1956 :34). The various reasons for the failure of land reforms in India and the policy logic of the Congress party which I discussed in Chapter VI apply to the case of West Bengal in all respects.

However, given the overall comparison between West Bengal and Bihar the resistence of the zamindars to the reform was not so great as it was in Bihar or even U.P. As Sunil Sengupta writes :

> "The holders of intermediary interests in West Bengal could hardly offer any resistance excepting that they could make their position felt in respect of payment of adequate compensation. Their counterparts coming

> from East Bengal who have now been bereft of all their erstwhile landed interests had hardly any common cause to offer with the intermediary interests owners of West Bengal. Moreover, the ideological basis for putting an end to what was essentially and parasitic system had become sufficiently strong in Bengal in the course of the anti-imperialist struggle". (Sengupta, 1981 : A-71).

What can be inferred from this explanation, however, is that whatever resistence the intermediary interests put up in West Bengal it had an adverse impact on the intended change in the agrarian structure in favour of the landless and the landpoor in the context of the already unfavourable land-man ratio in West Bengal.

The next and by far the most comprehansive legislative measure in the land reforms in West Bengal was the West Bengal Land Reforms Act 1955 (WLRA). Central to WLRA 1955 are the provisions for ceiling on land holdings, distribution of surplus land and consolidating the rights of the bargadars and sharecroppers. The Act underwent amendments in 1957, 1960, 1965, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1974, 1976, and 1977.

The amendment passed by the left front government in 1977 came into operation after the assent of the president. But another amendment bill passed by the left front government in 1981 whereby, claims Left Front Government, further surplus land in a big scale would be acquired for distribution, has not yet received the President's assent.

The main provisions of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act underwent various changes during the Congress regime itself, during the United Front Governments in 1967 (for nine months) and 1969-72, then again Congress regime upto 1977 and finally the Left Front Government from 1977 till to-day.

The Act divides the landowners and holders interest in the land into two broad categories - intermediaries on the one hand and raiyats and underraiyats on the other.

The ceiling on agricultural land, fixed on individual basis.is 2.5 standard hectares fro one individual adult unmarried cultivator and 5.0 standard hectares for a family of 2 to 5 members. An additional half an hectare per every extra adult in a family can be allowed upto a maximum of 7.0 hecatres. One standard hectare refers to one hectare of land in irrigated areas and 1.4 hectares in any other area including orchards. For Co-operative societies, co-operative farming societies, companies and Hindu undivided families or firms, the ceiling is the multiple of the basic ceiling according to the membership of these units.

Lands under religious or charitable institutions are exempted from the ceiling. Exemption to religious turn and endowments has given people opportunity to enjoy income from lands above the ceiling and has substantially diminished

the land available for distribution. The Amendment Bill, April 1981 has abolished this exemption. However, this and many other loopholes in the Act had already resulted in reducing the extent of surplus land before the Amendment Bill was passed.

2. Tenancy Reforms and Protection of Bargadars

The provisions of the West Bengal Bargadars Act were incorporated in the West Bengal Land Reforms Act 1955. The right of a bargadar to cultivate has been increased to 1.0 hectares including the land he owns as a raiyat. The bargadars retain 50 per cent of the produce if the landowner provides, cattle, manure and seeds and the bargadars ploughs, harrows, transplants, weeds and harvests. If the bargadars provide factors of production and labour inputs also he is eligible to 75 per cent of the produce. A bargadar cannot be evicted, unless he is fails to cultivate the land, uses the land for non-agricultural purposes does not deliver the due share to the owner, or the owner wants the land for bona-afide self-cultivation. In the latter case, the maximum the owner might take is 3.0 hectares leaving a minimum of 1 hectare to the sharecropper. Although voluntary surrender by the bargadars is allowed, it will be inquired into if it is genuine or done under duress.

The amendments made in 1966 during the Congress regime and in 1970 and 1971 during the Left and United Front Governments improved the status of the bargadars. By far the most important amendment is the West Bengal Land Reforms Amendment Bill 1977 passed by the Left Front Government just after coming to power in March 1977 which subsequently got the President's assent. The Left Front Government was bent upon improving the status of the bargadars as it had the confidence of massive support with which it was elected, unlike the precarious and fluid support which it had during it's participation in the two United Front Governments in 1967 and 1969. It is worthwhile to discuss here the various provisions of the Amendment Bill in detail to find how sound has been the legislation initiated by a left oriented government.

Three crucial provisions of the Act are related to redefinition of personal cultivation, protection against eviction and inclusion of some legal obligation on the part of the landowners.

Personal cultivation has two different meanings which differ radically from that in the earlier Act. Now a plot of land having no bargadars will be deemed to be cultivated personally only if the owner of a member of his family resides for the greater part of the year in the locality

where the land is situated and the principal source of his income is derived from the produce from that land. Personal cultivation does not mean cultivation by hired labourers. As a result from 1977 onwards a landowner or member of his family has to either let out his land to bargadars or personally cultivate it.

Further, a landowner already leasing out to a bargadar can not evict him unless he plans to cultivate personally in accordance with the above definition Section 4(4)(b) of the Act provides that those owners who live away from their land in their native place or the place where the land is situated will not be entitled to hold that land and the government can sell away the land if it is not under personal cultivation for three successive years. Of course this provision will affect the absentee landlords belonging to non-agricultural families, money lenders and traders on the one hand and doctors, lawyers, teacher and other professionals who even under the ceiling law can still hold land within ceiling level on the other. If this new provision regarding the definition of personal cultivation and tenancy is implemented there is scope for a lot of land to be taken over by government and sold. But the consequence of this provision may adversely affect certain categories of people like an ordinary workers making say Rs. 200/- from his urban job and sending Rs. 100/- (hundred) to his family

or wife. Similarly, an ordinary worker dwelling in urban areas with his family may lose land in the village.

A small peasant who is a partly an owner and partly a bargadar and earns more as bargadar than as a owner will also lose. A poor peasant who owns a small plot fetching or lower income than his earnings from agricultural labour is also liable to lose his land. All these categories of landowners are toiling masses. N. Chandra (1977) feels that a further amendment clarifying that these provisions do not apply to people earning less than Rs. 6,000/- a year would remove these unintended drawbacks.

Finally, a person lawfully cultivating the land of another person shall be deemed to be a bargadar and the onus of proving that such a person is not a bargadar and that the land is in his personal cultivation lies on the owner. Whereas in the original Act the onus of proof that a particular person was a bargadar lay with him. This is the most radical provision introduced in favour of the bargadar. Further, the landowner has to issue a receipt to the effect that he has received his share and this will stand as evidence for the bargadar's rights. Failure to issue receipts is a cognisable offence punishable with imprisonment upto six months and/or a fine upto Rs. 1000/-

As N. K. Chandra (1977) comments, these changes in the provisions regarding the status of bargadars will result

in the abolition of absentee landlordism and semi-feudalism. He estimated that nearly 20 per cent of the total cultivated area was under the agriculturist landowners. The Government also estimated that nearly 3.5 million bargadars were cultivating under oral contract and would benefit from the new provisions.

Thus, viewed from any direction the changes made by the Left Front Government would change the process of land reforms initiated by the Congress regime which was from the beginning marked by indifference to the loopholes in the legislation forcible erviction or eviction of bargadars through the decrees of the courts and suppression of information on the actual possession of land creation of false trusts co-operative societies and conversion of agricultural lands into plantations and fisheries, etc. It will be seen in the following sections how the Left Parties have brought about a change in the situation with minimum changes in the law and effective implementation.

The law also provided for land consolidation that can be undertaken by the state with the consent of two thirds of the owners affected. It also provides for co-operative farming societies to be registered by the registrar of co-operative societies.

The excess land vested in the state shall be

distributed to the landless and the land poor of the locality on the condition that the prospective assignees should not own more than 0.4047 hectares or 1 acre for which half of the barga land should be taken account of preference will be given to persons belonging to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. The land so distributed cannot be transferred or sold. However, it can be mortgaged to a public credit institution and only for purposes of production or construction of a house.

In addition to the measures taken to protect the bargadars and agricultural labourers in the West Bengal Land Reforms Act other laws have also been enacted for acquisition of homestead land for distribution among the agricultural labourers, artisans, and fishermen. The West Bengal Acquisition of Homestead Land For Agricultural Labourers Artisans and Fishermen Act, 1975 is a major effort in this regard and has been implemented by the Left Front Government with the same vigour with which measures to ameliorate the bargadars and landless have been implemented.

The West Bengal Restoration of Alienated Land Act, 1973 protects the interests of the depressed cultivators who sold their lands in distress. If a person holding not more than 2 hectares sold his land during the period from December 1967 and 5 May 1973 out of dire necessity for money for the maintanance of his family or for meeting

the cost of cultivation such a person could apply to the special officer for restoration of the land within 4 years from May 1973. Such land could be restored if the original owner or the applicant pays the money which be received in the transaction and 4 per cent interest in not more than 10 years instalments.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion on land reform legislation in West Bengal that the measures are progressive, comprehensive and favourable to those who toil on the land. Legislation for the protection of the interests of bargadars as also the Welfare of the surplus land assignees includes above all, statutory financial assistance. The bargadar is considered by the banks for all purpose as owner over half of the land he holds as bargadar. This makes him free to a great extent, from his dependence on the land owner or any other private traditional lending source. The left parties claim that financial assistance by institutions is an attack on usury and serfdom from which the bargadars have been suffering.

This and the statutorily increased share in the product should certainly be called progressive. But the problem is that unlike, the tenancy reforms in Kerala where the tenants have been conferred ownership rights and have benefited a lot though the reform as a whole, in West

Bengal it is not so. In West Bengal the bargadars having only occupancy rights and are dependent on the sympathy of the landowners. Of particular importance is the fact that the enjoyment of rights which continue to be ongoing problem particularly in regions where the correlation of political forces and power structure are not favourable to the tenants. Further, in the event of coming to power of a new government unfavourable to the bargadars, the situation will become worse.

The measures for the promotion of the interests, of the landless labourers are limited. Firstly, the land that is available for redistribution is limited. Secondly, the land distributed will not suffice to enable the labourers to earn a reasonable income. The legislation for minimum wage i.e. Rs. 8/- is also conditioned by the availability of work and the provision of rural development works do not have any legislative sanction and are at the sympathy of the Centre which may restrict the funds depending on the motives of the party at the centre. Above all, the legislation for consolidation of landholdings and co-operativesation is loosely formulated. It is not statutorily compulsory that fragmented holdings either of small and marginalholders or of vested land assignees can be consolidated and some sort of communal ownership could be evolved.

The legislation for the welfare of the homestead dwellers who are mostly agricultural workers fishermen and other artisans is phraiseworthy, although in most cases it is a matter of legitimisation of the occupation by these categories of people.

(D) POLITICS, ADMINISTRATION AND ADJUDICATION OF LAND REFORMS

The Left alternative to Congress land reforms in West Bengal has to be examined in the context of the failure of land reforms under the Congress regimes upto 1967. Although compared to the neighbouring state of Bihar the resistence and machination of the zamindars and jotedars has been less in West Bengal (Sengupta, 1981), the Congress regime did not fare well.

On the other hand the relatively impressive picture of legislation and implementation of land reforms in West Bengal has to be seen in the background of the large majority of the bargadars and the landless in rural West Bengal from whom mere lip sympathy to populist programmes by long established right and left parties would not fetch any tangible electoral support, given the stiff electoral competition in West Bengal.

It appears to me that it is in this regard, especially from 1952 to 1967, that the left parties particularly the CPI, CPI(M), RSP and Forward Bloc underwent an

acid test in which they proved that they could support the above classes. The performance of the left parties has been demonstrated throughout this period when the left parties has been demonstrated throughout this period when the left parties stood by the bargadars, the landpoor and the landless in the face of the exploitative zamindars and jotedars. The left parties organised them politically to meet the machinations of the socially highcaste, economically upperclass and politically mobile landlords, particularly in the evasion of landreforms. At the grassroots level the left parties provided help and assistance to these classes in situations of dire need to lease in land and to get a due share of produce, keep whatever land they had in distress, and struggle to get work and high wages.

This only reflected in the increase in the strength of the left parties in the successive elections between 1952 and 1962. The following table will convince us that whereas the Congress Party maintained its strength during this period did not improve it, the CPI improved its strength slowly but steadily both in the Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. It can also be seen that the CPI had absorbed the support of the rightist parties and reduced the scope of independents and the Forward Bloc(M).

Table 9.2

Seats won by Different Parties in West Bengal, 1952-1962

Party	Legislative Assembly			Lok Sabha		
	1952	1957	1962	1952	1957	1962
Congress	150	152	157	24	23	23
Communist	28	46	50	5	6	8
Forward Bloc (M)	14	8	13	2	2	1
PSP	15	21	5	0	2	0
Janasangh	9	0	0	2	0	0
Hindu Mahasabha	4	0	0	0	0	0
Independents	18	25	26	1	3	3
Total	238	252	251	34	36	35

Source : Fadia : 1984 : 271

Seen from the ideological angle of the then CPI it was forging ahead on its parliamentary path and bidding for power. It is at this juncture in 1964 that the party was split, the Congress was weakened particularly by the alienation of the rich farmers who resented the procurement of foodgrains that went with the rationing system instraduced in 1965 and formation of the Bangla Congress, which favoured the rich peasantry under the leadership of Ajoy Mukherjee (Fadia 1984; Chattergee 1982). The complexity of the situation was reflected in the emergence of two

electoral fronts - the United Leftist Front consisting of the CPI, RSP, SSP, SUC, workers party, RCPI and Forward Bloc(M) on the one hand, and the people's United Leftist Front (PULF) consisting of the Bangla Congress, CPI, the Forward Bloc and the Balshevik Party on the other. Though separate, these two fronts opposed the dominance of the Congress party.

However, in 1967 the Congress secured the largest number of seats (127) though less than in the 1962 elections (157). Yet, it could not form the government because the two new fronts formed a United Democratic Front and succeeded in forming the government with a 14 point minimum programme. The CPI(M) persued in its politics of land reforms through its chief representative in the Ministry, Hare Krishna Konar who held the Land and Land Revenue Portfolio.

However, the United Front collapsed mainly because of agrarian and food policies. The politics of land reforms of the CPI(M) and the anti-centre stance of CPI(M) and other left parties could not be accommodated by the Bangla Congress. The second United Front Government formed in 1969 had a much higher representation of CPI(M), CPI and left parties who were dominant constitutents, crucial to the formation of the ministry was sharing of the Home Portfolio between the Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee (political and defence) and the Deputy Chief Minister, Jyoti Basu (consti-

tution, Elections, special General Administration and, police and press). However, once again the relations among the constitutents of the Front were not cordial as the CPI(M) with nine members in the ministry pursued its party programme. Its main efforts was to initiate amendments to the land reforms legislation and mobilisation of the bargadars and landless labourer against evictions and evasions by the zamindars and landowners, under the leadership of Hare Krishna Konar the then Land and Land Revenue Minister.

Whatever the constraints and limitations put by the central government and constitutional priorities that came in the way of pursuance of its policies particularly in the form of judicial scrutiny and whatever the strained relations with the co-participants in the coalition ministry on the one hand bitter enemity with the Congress party on the performance of the left parties has to be seen in the perspective of their increased strength in the Assembly and their image as a party of the exploited. This could be reckoned from the fact that whereas the Bangla Congress though the leading partners in the two united front governments faced disintegration in course of time and the left parties particularly the CPI(M) and the CPI emerged with a strong electoral base with the exception of 1972 which, the CPI(M) and other left parties assert, was a rigged poll of course this accusation is not far off the truth as many

specific and general studies on politics of West Bengal have shown. But this is one of the limitations which the left parties have to take into consideration while aspiring to come to power in the states and at the centre and in formulating corresponding tactics. In bourgeois liberal societies this is not surprising.

Although the electoral strength reflects a partial picture of their actual influence on the people, seen from the view point of the parliamentary politics of the left parties their electoral strength correlated to a great extent with their real support. The table below presents vividly the electoral support of the left and right parties in the six successive elections from 1967 to 1982.

Table 9.3

Seats won by Parties in the Legislative Assembly Elections, 1967-82

Party/year	1967	1969	1971	1972	1977	1982
Congress	127	55	CR 105 CO 2	216 2	C(I) 20	C(I) 49 C(S) 4
Bangla Congress	34	33	5	-	-	-
CPI	16	30	13	35		7
CPI(M)	43	80	111	14	178	174
Forward Bloc	13	21	3	-	25	28
Forward Bloc(M)	1	1	2	-	2	-
SUC	-	7	7	1	-	-
RSP	6	12	3	5	20	19
Others*	40	41	19	7	49	13
Total	280	280	270	280	294	294

Source : Compiled from Babulal Fadia (1984) pp.275, 279 & 280
*for 1967, 1969, 1971, 1972 others include PSP, SSP, RCPI, WPI (Offshoot of RSP) Janasangh, Swatantra Party, Lok Sevak Sangha (Purulia) Gorkha League (Darjeeling) INDEF, Progressive Muslim league, Muslim League, Biplabi Banglan Congress, Jharkhand party and for 1977 it includes 29 seats for the Janata Party. The Janata party contested 93 seats in 1982 but did not win any.

It is clear from Table 9.3 that whereas the Congress' strength has gone down from 127 seats in 1967 to 55 in 1969 and then increased to 105 seats only in 1971. It's strength went up to 216 seats only in 1972 in the socalled rigged poll. It secured only 20 in 1977 and 49 in 1982. The strength of the Bangla Congress Went down from 34 seats in 1967 and 33 in 1969 to 5 seats in 1971. On the other hand the CPI's strength rose from 16 seats in 1967 to 30 seats in 1969 and came down to 13 seats in 1971. It secured the highest number of seats in 1972 (35) when it contested the elections in alliance with the Congress. The CPI(M)'s strength was 43 seats in 1967. It nearly doubled (80) 1969 and trebled (111) in 1971. Its strength came down to 14 in 1972. It experienced landslide victory in 1977 (178 out of 294) and in 1982 (174 out of 294). The seats of Forward Bloc increased from 13 in 1967 to 21 in the 1969. It lost seats to the CPI(M) in 1971 as its strength was reduced to 3. However, it regained its position in 1977 (25) and improved impressively in 1982 (28). Whereas the Forward Bloc(M)'s strength was minimal other left parties like SUC and RSP which participated in United Democratic Front Governments get considerable number of seats SUC 7 seats both in 1969 and 1971 and RSP 6 seats in 1967, 12 seats in 1969 and 3 seats in 1971. However the SUC got none in 1977 and 1982 but RSP secured 29 seats in 1977 and almost the same in 1982.

Like the CPI and CPI(M), all the left parties have land reforms as the major plank in their electoral manifastoes

and at the same time are working for their long run goals, each having its distinct path to reach them.

Implementation of land reforms, reorientating the administation, overcoming with the judicial obstacles strggling against the evasions of reform measures in West Bengal and also the net results of land reform have to be understood in the context of the conglomeration of left parties.

On the other hand the CPI the CPI(M) and the other left parties were facing strong criticism from the non-parliamentary left since 1967. In fact the activities of the Naxalites, in line with their extra-parliamentary path aimed at overthrowing the United Front Governments. As such, United Front Governments were under the compulsion of pacifying the discontented peasantry lest they would increasingly come under the banner of the extra-parliamentary left. Thus the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary left had influenced the overall politics of land reforms in West Bengal during this particular period from 1964 to 1982. Whereas the period from 1962-1976 had been a period of instability, uncertainty political turmoil when the validity of the strategy and tactics of the various contending political parties had been put to test the period from 1977 to 1985 seems to be one of political stability normal functioning of the administrative machinery and greater social peace.

As discussed elsewhere in this study the left parties have been able to secure the maximum co-operation from the administration and officials in the implementation of reforms. The politicians and peasant leaders however complement the administration and will not be a counterwailing force in the process of implementation of land reforms. During the United Front Governments because of political instability and a fluid situation, the administration was in chaos and was indifferent to the governments fromed by parties with different interests and motives and which could not initiate united political action. But during the Left Front Period it is the administration which has been playing a crucial role in the implementation of reforms because of many factors. Firstly, Left Front provides both unity of policy and unity of action in all matters, more so in regard to the land reforms. There are less differences among the constituents of the Left Front on the issue of land reforms than on any other issue. Secondly, it is for the land and land revenue department, once there are clear cut political directions and effective political checks to effectively implement the law. Lastly the administration will be able to deal with litigation only under the nose of an effective government with political will.

Two categories of people are interested in frustrating land reforms viz. the land owners or the losers in the reform and the lawyers - from petty ones at local level to the most

The two categaries of people are interested in frustrating land reforms viz. the land owners or the losers in the reform and the lawyers - from petty ones at local level to the most experienced ones. It appears that the Left Front have not fought the judiciary at the political level, for example by mobilizing the bargadars. They have been content in using the administration to file and fight cases.

There is another dimension. A landowner who wants to sell off a plot to a person interested can get a potential buyer whom the land owner can declare as a tenant and get registered as such. Such buyers, as I have observed in a few cases are rich and at the same time socially and economically mobile. Even if the genuine bargadar comes forward and challenges this, the fake one can go to court.

In areas like 24-parganas and other districts close to Calcutta the former zamindars have been trying to get their lands bank by all means irrespective of the time and money involved. Such victimisation of bargadars has affected even many potential supporters of CPI(M). However, the party or any front organisation doesn't pay for attending to the case. As a result, even if the party support is there for bargadars, the bargadars must be economically well to undergo the legal procedure. Thus poor bargadars cannot avail the support of the party or persons articulate in it at the local level.

However, the Left Front Government has not been more successful overcoming the judicial obstacles. Whereas the officials adopted all tactics, took risks in the field while implementing barga and ceiling laws in the face of resistence and hostility from rival parties and interests the courts undid many of their efforts. This is what has come out of my dialogues with officials and field observations. This also reflects in extent of vested land held up under injuctions.

(2) PROGRESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND REFORMS IN WEST BENGAL

In this section I will discuss the actual implementation of land reforms with statistical evidence. The main focus will be on the slow process of land reforms during the Congress regime upto 1967 and how the process was expedited during the United Front Governments between 1967 and 1972; and what happened when the Congress took over in 1972 and continued upto 1977 which included the emergency period during which land reforms were implemented under central direction.

1. Security of Tenure and Conferment of OCcupancy Rights on Bargadars - 'Operation Barga'

According to section 50 (e) of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955 sharecropping contracts should be recorded and the rights of the bargadars registered so as to enable them to enjoy the rights provided in the law. However, during the Congress regime and even under the United Front Governments.

The process which started in 1974 was very slow till the Left front government gave a push. During the period preceding 1977 the left parties had organised the bargadars against frequent evictions by the jotedars and minimised adverse consequences in which barga cultivation, prevalent through out West Bengal, was typically marked by harvest time confrontation in which the bargadars were always on the defensive. The registered bargadars were no exception to such hardships.

It is only after the Left Front came to power and when there was a total change in the political atmosphere which turned quite favourable to the bargadars that the registration of bargadars started. Whereas upto 1978 the recording of bargadars was not in the normal process, in September, 1982 the Government started registering the burgadars on a warfooting under the programme of 'operation barga'.

Table 9.4 compares the extent registration of bargadars before the Left Front came to power with the speed with which the Front Government did the job after it came to power.

It is clear from the table that the trends in the extent of recording has gone up manifold from 1977 to 1984. From 1977 to 1982 the rate of recording went upto 300 per cent from 2.5 lakh in 1977 to 12.06 lakhs in 1982. Thus the total incr ase in the number of bargadars in 5 years comes to 9.56 laksh. In the next two years, from 1982 to 1984 the number increased by 90,000.

Table 9.4

Progress of Registration of Bargadars Normal Process & Operation Barga

Total Estimated	Upto		Number Registered
20 to 25 lakhs		1977	2,50,000
" "	Dec.	1979	7,85,117
" "	July	1980	9,45,157
" "	Dec.	1980	10,01,986
" "	June	1981	10,89,500
" "	Dec.	1981	11,25,826
" "	Dec.	1982	12,06,000
" "	April	1983	12,33,000
" "	June	1984	12,96,000

Source : For 1977 CPI(M) state committee West Bengal (1985)
For 1977 to 1984 compiled from statistical Reports Board of Revenue Government of West Bengal 1979 to 1982.

Compared to the total number of bargadars, estimated at between 20 to 25 lakhs, the number registered constitutes more than half of the total. That makes it clear that recording of bargadars whereby the tenant cultivator have been conferred occupancy rights has undoubtedly been a great achievement in quantitative terms.

2. Ceiling on Landholdings

The performance of the Congress Government in regard to the implementation of ceiling laws has been well documented.

A study by the Directorate of Land Records and Survey, West Bengal completed in 1971 revealed that as many as 5387 suits were filed under articles 226 and 227 of the constitution. There were many civil suits filed in subordinate courts 'it is any body's guess verting of what a huge quantity of land has been foiled by the suits'. The study, basing itself on the report of the Floud Commission on Agrarian Structure in West Bengal, estimated that with a ceiling of 25 acres in accordance with the WBEA 1953, 37.3 per cent of the total arable land should have been vested in the state. By June 1971 when the implementation of ceiling laws under the WBEA Act 1953 was expected to be completed, only 1,373,284 acres of land, (including cultivable waste land) was vested. The total arable land being 14,373,284 acres this comes to only 9.5 of total arable land as against the target of 37.3 per cent (Ghosh and K. Nagraj, 1978).

Ghosh and Nagraj have evaluated actual implementation during various periods which will give us a picture of implementation of ceiling laws as also redistribution under various regimes from 1953 to 1976.

It is clear that out of 1,43,77,572 acres estimated surplus arable land, upto 1967 only 3.37 lakhs was vested. From 1967 to 1972 during the period of United Front Governments, in which both left parties and Bangla Congress were in power with interludes of President's rule the figures went up to

9.25 lakhs. Thus, in a period of 5 years only 5.88 lakhs acres could be vested. Further, during the Congress regime the period from 1972 to January 1976, which also covers the period of emergency only 0.47 could be vested.

Table 9.5

Extent of Implementation of Ceiling Laws in West Bengal Agricultural Land (in Lakhs acres)

Period	Vested	Taken over	Distributed	Families benefited
Upto 1967	3.37	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
1967-1970	3.43	N.A.	2.32	2.38
Upto May, 1972	9.23	7.02	3.67	N.A.
1972-Janunary 1976	0.47	0.32	0.21	N.A.
Upto 1976	10.25	8.56	6.20	8.47

Source : Ghosh and Nagraj, 1978 : 58.
N.B. The total estimates surplus was 1,43,77,572 acres of arable land.

Actual land taken over and distributed was much less than the actual land vested on paper upto 1970 only 2.32 lakhs areas of land could be distributed and 2.38 lakhs families could benefit upto 1972 the area taken possession of was 7.02 lakh acres and the area distributed was only half of it i.e. 3.67 lakh acres. During the period of Congress rule from 1972 to January 1976 only 0.32 lakh acres could be taken over and 0.21 lakh acres could be distributed. By April 1976 the total land vested was 10.25 lakh acres, total land taken over was 8.56 lakh acres and total land distributed was 6.20 lakh acres

and the number of beneficiaries came to 8.47 lakhs.

On the whole the above figures clearly illustrate that during the Congress regime the picture is discouraging in comparison to the period of United Front Government.

I will now consider the figures for the period since Left Front Government came to power in 1977 till 1984. The distribution of pattas started in 1979. That means, till 1979 the nature of the process of distribution was on the earlier pattern.

Further, 9,68,675 acres could be vested and 6,12,505 acres could be distributed, from 1978 to 1984 during the period of Left Front Governments. Within 6 years an extra acrage of nearly 3 lakhs could be vested of which 1,77,056.32 acres could be distributed. Further, as on 30 June, 1984 2,95,807.29 was still available for distribution.

This is notable in more than one sense. After the ceiling laws were in operation for 20 years upto 1978 the scope for vesting surplus was very little. Divisions of various kinds took place during this period which reduced the scope for surplus. It is only the political will of the Left Front Government which increasingly utilised the administrative machinery and encouraged the participation of beneficiaries in the implementation that could give fruitful results.

Table 9.6

Implementation of Ceiling Laws : 1979-1984 (Agricultural land in Acres)

Period	Land Vested	Hit by injunctions	Distributed	No. of Beneficiaries
Upto March 1978	96,875.00	80,833.00	6,12,505.00	N.A.
Upto June 1979	11,17,130.94	1,70,010.05	6,15,503.87	9,75,032
Upto June 1980	11,97,473.15	1,78,343.54	6,50,803.11	11,28,795
Upto December 1980	12,11,616.75	1,79,207.21	6,73,452.63	11,94,176
Upto June 1981	12,26,785.33	1,78,616.95	7,01,562.65	12,84,856
Upto December 1981	12,49,177.76	1,79,464.45	7,16,916.22	13,24,062
Upto December 1982	12,50,000.00	N.A.	7,51,000.00	14,18,000
Upto December 1984	12,67,326.85	1,81,257.85	7,90,761.32	15,21,578

Source : For 1978 Dilip Swamy, Economic Effects of Distribution of land : A Case Study of Birbhum.
For 1979, 1980, 1981, compiled from statistical Reports, Land Reforms in West Bengal, Board of Revenue, Government of West Bengal from 1979.
For 1982 West Bengal State Committee CPI(M), 1983
For 1984, Officeof the Minister-in-charge for Land and Land Revenue, Government of West Bengal.

However, this does not exhaust the process of vesting land. There are further sources, particularly the land categorised as non-agricultural land which is under the occupancy tenants which the Left Front wants to eliminate and land under court injunctions. Keeping this in view, the West Bengal Assembly passed the West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill 1981. But this Act has been pending with the president for approval. The Left Front Government hopes to vest surplus land further to redistribute among the landless labourers. The question remains what efforts the Government has taken to deal with this tricky question involving constitutional issue like fundamental rights and centre-state relations.

3. Conferment of Ownership Rights on Hutment Dwellers

During the United Front regimes efforts were made to confer ownership rights on hutment dwellers. A Bill was introduced in July 1969 by the then Revenue Minister Hare Krishna Konar. It became an Act in 1975 known as West Bengal Acquisition of Homestead Land for Agricultural labourers Artisans and Fishermen Act, 1975. The Act aimed at the welfare of the agricultural labourers, artisans and fishermen whereby they could own the homestead land they had been living on for the last few decades. Of particular importance are the Santhal tribals. Most of the plots

include some bunds of the tanks or fallow land and waste lands. Owing to the pressure of landlords and village chieftains such places have not been recorded in the names of long standing tenants. Because of increasing prices these plots became important for the owners and the dwellers of various kinds mentioned above became vulnerable to forcible evictions.

In addition to these dwellers who were brought from the localities there were thousands and lakhs of people without land to have their houses in rural West Bengal.

During the Congress regime no attention was paid to this issue although demands were made. The first United Front in 1965 a Bill but consent from the Central Government came only after the United Front Government was ousted. The issue was reconsidered when the second United Front Government came to power (Konar, 1977b : 96).

However, it became an Act only in 1975 and the recording of the names of the homestead dwellers started after the Left Front Government came to power. Under the law 0.033 hectares or five cottahs of land occupied by the dweller would be deemed to have been acquired by the state and the same would be treated as belonging to the occupier. Table 9.7 presents the progress of implementation of this measure.

Table 9.7

Progress of Implementation of West Bengal Acquisition of Homestead Land for Agricultural Labourers, Artisans and Fishermen At, 1975

Upto	No. of beneficiaries	S.C.	S.T.
September 1979	29,722	N.A.	N.A.
December 1979	41,077	N.A.	N.A.
June 1980	52,672	N.A.	N.A.
December 1980	64,400	2	
June 1981	82,881	36,305	16,500
December 1981	1,18,481	49,603	22,103
December 1982	1,50,000	N.A.	N.A.
April 1983	1,60,000	N.A.	N.A.
December 1984	1,83,956	76,494	36,461

Source : For figures up to 1981 compiled from the statistical Reports, Department of Land Revenue, Government of West Bengal from 1979 to 1981, for the rest Government of West Bengal 1981, 1983 and 1984.

The progress illustrated in the table is impressive. Number of beneficiaries was only 29,729 by September 1979. It increased progressively to 1,83,956 in 1984. Majority of the beneficiaries are Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and landless poor from other sections. The benefit secured by them is not small in the sense that some of the plots are cultivable.

4. Implementation of West Bengal Restoration of Alienated Land Act, 1973.

The West Bengal Restoration of Alienated Land Act 1973 as discussed in an earlier section is meant for restoring the alienated land to the original owner who sold or transferred land in consideration of sale in distress. This progressive measure has been implemented by the Government. Although the measure does not involve large areas of land it prevents alienation of land.

From Table 9.8 it can be observed that by December 1979 there were 2,12,117 cases filed under this Act and nearly half of them had been heard. Cases of restoration were nearly 17 per cent and involved 5,532.55 acres. In the context of the possibility of alienation of land distributed to the landless and landpoor under the scheme of distribution of vested land, the measure and its actual implementation seems to be an affective preventive measure against alienation of land.

Table 9.8

Progress of Implementation of Alienated Land Act

Upto	No. of Petitions filed	No. of petitions Heard	Cases of Restoration of Land	
			No. of Beneficiaries	Total area in acres
December 1978	1,51,345	62,001	9,284	6,445.43
December 1979	2,12,117	92,644	14,216	5,532.55

Source : Compiled from statistical Reports, Board of Land Revenue, Government of West Bengal, 1978 and 1979

(F) LAND REFORMS AND CHANGES IN AGRARIAN STRUCTURE

One of the important effects of land reforms legislation is its impact on the agrarian structure. This is generally indicated by changes in landholding size groups and area under each size group. However, it is difficult to trace the precise impact of legislation on this feature of the agrarian structure. One has to see critically whether the changes are due to such measures as tenancy reforms and redistribution of land through acquisition of surplus land or they are due to the phenomenon of parallel land reforms consisting of illegitimate benami transfers, divisions among family members etc.

In the case of West Bengal as Ratan Ghosh (1976) points out, though an insignificant amount of land was distributed in the late fities, the total land under the size group of 25 acres and above declined by about 8 per cent. At the same time the size group 2.5 - 5 acres increased by 6 per cent while the increase in area of the corresponding land size group was 3 per cent. The changes are certainly not due to land reforms and distribution of surplus land. This is evident from the fact that the area under the lowest size class increased by one per cent while the number of households decreased by 3 per cent. As can be seen from Table 9.9 the shift in area owned from upper most size to lower size groups is because of the machinations of the landlords to evade the

Table 9.9

Percentage of Households or Raiyats and Area Owned in Rural Bengal : 1953-54 to 1974-75

Size class of ownership holdings (acres)	1953-54		1959-60		1960-61		1960-61		1970-71		1971-72		1974-75	
	Household	Area owned	Household	Area owned	Household	Area owned	Household	Area owned	Household	Area owned	Household	Area owned	Household	Area owned
Below 2.50	73.5	15.9	72.1	17.9	69.3	17.5	70.6	16.9	77.6	27.3	86.2	34.4	-	-
2.50-5.00	12.6	18.6	14.3	22.8	16.8	26.0	15.6	24.7	12.6	25.7	7.0	17.4	-	-
Below 5.00	86.1	34.5	86.4	40.7	86.1	43.5	86.2	41.6	90.2	53.0	93.2	51.8	90.0	44.1
5.00-10.00	8.6	25.5	8.9	26.8	9.8	28.8	9.4	28.1	7.3	27.7	4.4	21.3	5.8	16.5
10.00-15.00	2.8	14.0	2.6	14.0	2.6	13.4	2.6	13.8	1.7	11.6	1.3	11.3	2.1	11.3
15.00-25.00	1.9	14.8	1.9	16.1	1.3	10.9	1.6	13.5	0.7	7.1	0.7	9.5	-	-
15.00 & above	2.6	26.1	2.1	18.5	1.5	14.3	1.8	16.5	0.8	7.8	1.1	15.8	2.1	23.0
25.00 & above	0.7	11.3	0.2	2.4	0.2	3.4	0.2	3.0	0.1	0.7	0.4	6.3	-	-

Source : Ratan Ghosh, 1976

ceiling laws. Because of the operation of the modified ceiling law providing for family ceiling under the WBLR Act 1971, extent of total land distributed came to 2.5 lakh acres which was distributed among 4 lakh households.

From an examination of the figures for landholding we notice that the proportion of raiyats went down by 3 per cent and the area owned by them by about 8 per cent in the size class of 5 acres and below between 1971-72 and 1974-75. During the same period the number of households in the size group of 15 acres and above increased by 1 per cent and the area by 12 per cent. This makes it clear that in the early seventies at least the impact of ceiling laws and surplus land dstribution was meagre. That is, the land reforms failed to break the concentration of land. This is mainly because the total area distributed was only 4.5 per cent of the total area owned.

A.K. Ghose (1983) has analysed the phenomenon of disaggregation and fragmentation of landholdings. Table 9.10 presents these trends. It is clear from the table that "small farms have not only been growing in number but have also been increasing their share of the operated area." Reaffirming Ratan Ghosh's contention that there was no significant redistribution of land between 1953/54 and 1970/71 he attributes the disaggregation and fragmentation of holdings to the reaction of big landholders to the ceiling legislation which took various forms. The net effect of this disaggregated evolution of the agrarian structure has been increasing

fragmentation of holdings.

In 1970/71 more than 60 per cent of the operational holdings belonged to the size group of less than 2.5 acres and together accounted for less than 25 per cent of the area under cultivation. The corresponding proportions were 45 per cent and 14 per cent in 1960-61. At the upper end, holdings of size about 10 acres formed only 3 per cent of the total number of holdings in 1970-71 and they accounted for more than 15 per cent of the operated area. The corresponding percentage for 1960/61 were seven and 26 respectively.

Further, taking data for 1970-71 and 1976-77 also in juxtaposition, A.V. Jose (1984) found the same trends. The proportion of holdings of less than one hectare in size increased from 60 to 66 per cent during this period. At the upper end the proportion of holdings in 4 hectares and above size groups declined from 4.5 to 2.6 per cent and the corresponding decline in the area was from 25 per cent in 1970-71 to 17 per cent in 1976-77. The inequality coefficient of the land distributions marginally declined from 0.52 to 0.51 between these years. His interperetation of the overall changes in the agrarian structure of West Bengal sound right. The land distribution data unequivocally illustrate that the process of marginalization of holdings was taking place in West Bengal presumably on account of democraphic pressure

on land given the fact that structural changes are taking place in size groups unrelated to ceiling laws and redistribution by institutional interference, the trend in marginalization and divisions of holdings among nuclear families is because of the population growth in co-existence with inadequate expansion of arable land (A. V. Jose, 1984 : 143).

1. Place of Tenancy and Agricultural Work Force and Agricultural Labourers

Tenancy and agricultural labourers are two crucial factors in the agrarian economy of West Bengal. With the introduction of private land ownership and commerciliration of agriculture various categories of agrarian population appeared on the agrarian scene. At the same time a dynamic process of stratification of the peasantry with control on land as a variable also took place.

Table 9.11

Number of the Agricultural Workers Per Unit of Arable Land in West Bengal 1961 to 1978

	1961	1971	1978
Arable land (in thousand hectares)	5,818	5,825	5,717
Number of workers in agriculture (thousand)	6,440	7,442	8,649
Agricultural workers per thousand hectares of arable land	1,107	1,278	1,513

Annual rate of growth of arable land 1961-78 = Nil

Annual rate of growth of agricultural workers 1960-78 = 1.75%

Source : A. V. Jose 1984 : 140

It is clear from Table 9.11 that while there was no increase in the arable land between 1961 and 1978 the number of agricultural workers per thousand hectares of arable land increased considerably from 1107 to 1513 giving an annual growth rate of 1.75 per cent.

The distribution of the rural work force in West Bengal in 1981 was 4.75 million cultivaters; 3.85 million agricultural labourers and 0.7 million labourers in plantations. According to the 1981 census data; agricultural labourers constitute 45 per cent of the agricultural work force. In fact the proportion of agricultural labourers has increased over the decades from 1951 to 1981 - from 26 per cent in 1951 to 45 per cent in 1981. The rural Labour Enquiries of 1964/65 and 1974/75 the number of agricultural labour households increased from 1.2 to 1.8 million. The percentage increases in the number of households as well as of agricultural labourers were higher than the figures for India. Within this road trend the percentage share of landless agricultural labourers in West Bengal in the total agricultural labour households was higher in West Bengal than in the rest of the country. That is, the number of households without access to land has increased.

We find an illustration of the decadewise increase in the agricultural labourers as per cent of agricultural workforce in Table 9.12.

Table 9.12

Agricultural Labourers as Percentage of Agricultural Workers in West Bengal

Year	Percentage
1901	13.63
1911	14.65
1921	15.93
1931	27.22
1941	26.38
1951	25.91
1961	28.24
1971	44.28

Source : Ghose 1983 : 101

It is clear from Table 9.12 that the proportion of agricultural labourers in the agricultural workforce doubled between 1901-1931 and trebled between 1901 and 1971.

The percentage of area under tenancy and sharecropping is given in Table 9.13.

Table 9.13

Percentage of Operated Area Under Tenancy in West Bengal 1938 - 1970/71

Year	Area (%)
1938	23.45
1953	25.43
1960	17.65
1970	18.73

Source : Ghose, 1983 : 102

On the basis of the growth of agricultural labourers and changes in the area under tenancy as found in the tables 9.12 and 9.13. We can say that it is not the trends in the changes in the area of tenancy as percentage of area cultivated that is reflected in the growth of agricultural labourers. Moreover, the percentage decline in the area under tenancy is not significant at least between 1960 and 1970.

The salient features of the evolution of the agrarian structure in West Bengal are : growth of hired labourers which should be seen in the context of growth of small farms and not large farms; and sharecropping which has a prominent place in spite of the growth of small farms. The latter means that tenants lease in even small and marginal holdings. The growth of agricultural labour is another important feature which could be not only because of demographic pressure but also because of acquisition by non-agriculturalists, but not nascent rural capitalists, and shows pauperisation of the peasantry, and not proletarianisation. (A. Ghose, 1983 : 104)

(G) GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE

One of the items on the agenda of the agrarian programme of the Left Front Government has been agricultural development in association with land reforms and redistribution of land. At the same time the programme aims at increased agricultural wages which, it is hoped, is possible in the context of

increased production and productivity. It will be meaningful to try to see the impact of land reforms on these two factors. It is argued that security of tenure and provisions favourable to the bargadars and sharecroppers and distribution of even small plots to the agricultural labourers should lead to intensity of cultivation and growth of demand for agricultural labour.

Table 9.14

Food Grain Production in West Bengal : 1976-77 to 1981-82
(including pulses in tonnes)

1976-77 Last year of the Congress regime	74,53,800
1977-78 First year of the Left Front Govt.	89,70,200
1978-79	80,44,500
1979-80	70,62,100
1980-81	82,81,000
1981-82	64,72,700

Source : West Bengal State Committee CPI(M), 1983 : 84

However, it appears to me that the question of production and productivity cannot directly be related to the success of land reforms and more so in the context of the agrarian structure as it has been evolving in West Bengal. Ghose has taken an historical perspective of the situation in West Bengal. During the period from 1891-1947 and the output of non-food crops increased. The decline in food grains was also, due to fall in the rates in yield per acre, although this trend was much less prominent in West Bengal than in Orissa and Bihar. However, Ghose writes, that because of the increase in average

and extensive cultivation growth in food grains was on the whole positive. But this was nullified by the growth of population. A persistent growth of non-food grains output as compared to foodgrains, slow growth of land productivity were the factors mainly responsible for the fall in the per capita food output during 1970/71A to 1976/77.

The decline in per capita food grains output is a disturbing factor in terms of its implication for the generation of poverty. This also means a decline in marketed surplus of food grains, which adversely affects the process of industrialisation (Ghose, 1983 : 94-97).

In terms of technological change, although in the post-1947 period, a break with the past is seen it has not been able to prevent a decline in per-capita food output.

(H) WAGE RATES OF AGRICULTURAL LABOURERS IN WEST BENGAL

One of the objectives of the Left Front in the agrarian sector is to promote the interests of the landless agricultural labourers by ensuring reasonable agricultural wage rates and availability of work. This is significant in the context of limited surplus land available for distribution among the landless. Of course there are serious structural constraints as discussed above in this regard. What is thought possible, is to prevent a major fall in the real wage rates in the given matrix of relations of production by taking certain statutory measures and effectively implementing them.

Not that minimum wage rates were not statutorily fixed earlier but they were not implemented during the earlier regimes. Nor was the overall agrarian situation such as to create demand for labour and maintain growth in the wage rates of agricultural labour.

Table 9.15 presents the trends in the wage rates of agricultural labourers. It is clear from Table 9.15 that the real wages of agricultural labourers declined between 1960/61 to 1975/76. There was a size in the real wages of female agricultural labourers for the first time in 1976/77 over 1960/61. It further increased sharply in 1977/78 (130.8) declining afterwards in 1978/79 and 1979/80. In the case of male workers real wages increased for the first time in 1977/78 over 1960/61 and the same trend continued in subsequent years.

However, as Jose (1984) has rightly pointed out, the increase in the wage rates from the mid-1970s onwards did not mean an increase in the income of the agricultural workers of the same magnitude. During 1964/65 and 1975/76 there was outright decline in the volume of employment available to agricultural labourers in West Bengal. The average annual days of wage employment of men belonging to agricultural labourers households declined from 297 days in 1964/65 to 233 days by 1974/75. For women agricultural labourers the figures were 206 days and 149 days respectively. The trends for the whole of India were in consonance with the trends

in West Bengal, of course with slightly different magnitude.

Three basic constraints on growth and technological change in West Bengal's agriculture are : a combination of extreme smallness and fragmentation of holdings; the dominance of usury and capital and the existence of a group of parasitical landowners superimposed on the peasantry. Private investment cannot be expected from the rentiers and usurers because of the very low level of generation of profit in agriculture and which is far lower on the small farm economy compared to that on usury. This trend will continue given the unlikelyhood of labour being absorbed into the industrial sector and will become even more persistent. (Ghose 1983 : 110-111).

The only alternative would be introducing joint cultivation and joint rent that would make it possible to introduce technology, to raise productivity and to cultivate more intensively. All this could naturally create demand for more labour. According to Ghose the existing relations of production.

I would add a few sentences here much in line with what Ghose and many others, (S. Sengupta, 1981; B.D. Bhattacharya, 1983) as well as some of the leaders of the constitutents of Left Front have argued. Keeping the programmatic objective of the party in mind it can be said that any radical initiative in regard to agrarian reforms

Table 9.15

Trends in Money and Real Wage Rates of Agricultural Labourers in West Bengal

Year	Average Money Wage Rates (Rupees per day)		Index Numbers of Money Wage Rates 1960/61 = 100		Consumer Price Index Numbers for Agricultural Labourers 1960/61 = 100	Index Numbers of Real Wage Rates 1960/61 = 100	
	Men	Women	Men	Women		Men	Women
1960/61	1.70	1.41	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.00
1961/62	1.84	1.51	108.2	107.1	105	103.1	102.0
1962/63	N.A.	N.A.	-	-	123	-	-
1963/64	1.95	1.63	114.7	115.6	-	-	-
1964/65	2.15	1.66	126.5	117.7	136	93.0	86.6
1965/66	2.57	2.05	151.2	145.4	170	88.9	85.5
1966/67	2.84	2.25	167.1	159.6	197	84.8	81.0
1967/68	3.48	2.93	204.7	207.8	241	84.9	86.2
1968/69	3.04	2.52	178.8	178.7	200	89.4	89.4
1969/70	3.03	2.35	178.2	166.7	198	90.0	84.2
1970/71	2.98	2.47	175.3	175.2	206	85.1	85.0
1971/72	3.33	2.93	195.9	207.8	210	93.3	99.0
1972/73	3.37	2.96	198.2	209.9	217	91.4	96.7
1973/74	3.88	3.41	228.2	241.8	276	82.7	87.6
1974/75	4.32	4.09	254.1	290.1	338	75.2	85.8
1975/76	4.61	3.66	271.2	259.6	305	88.9	85.1
1976/77	5.27	4.68	310.0	331.9	327	94.8	101.5
1977/78	6.11	5.92	359.4	419.9	321	112.0	130.8
1978/79	6.42	5.58	377.7	395.7	330	114.4	119.9
1979/80	6.91	6.18	406.5	438.3	376	108.1	116.6

Source : A. V. Jose 1984 : 155

will entail adverse electoral consequences. However, it can be asked, on the other hand, whether the overall nature of political practice -strategy, tactics and forms of struggle is such as to impart such consciousness among the rural poor as to think of and demand a reorganisation of agriculture.

It becomes clear that the Left Front parties are not serious to mobilize and conscientise the rural poor- the poor and marginal farmers, bargadars and others having their miniscule plots at different places in an ayacut or an irrigation command area. In fact if it is done, the farmers will learn in practice the advantages of consolidation and collectivisation. This will expose the landpoor and landless to these forms of organisation of agriculture characteristic of the socialistic pattern in an embryonic form. The leadership at panchayats and at all levels, it is clearly evident, has not taken any initiative to bring any pressure from below on the parties. This is mainly because of the petty bourgeois character of the leadership consisting of teachers, doctors, lawyers and other practitioners who look for party orders to come from above and be imposed on the beneficiary classes through their mediation.

If the Left Front parties want to take any initiative it would tell upon their budgetary public allocations involving heavy administrative costs, because the finances required to

reorganise the agriculture in the way discussed are heavy.

This initiative may also be questioned on constitutional and legal grounds. As per the provisions in the West Bengal Land Reforms Act 1955, consolidation of holdings could be undertaken only on the consent of two thirds of the landholders involved. Co-operative agriculture can be introduced without militating against the individual status in the society.

It can be asked why these advanced measures of organisation of agriculture have not been applied in the case of 12 lakh bargadars registered even though they are obliged to need to the direction of the Left Front Government because it has ensured protection to them and the measure will benefit them. Here also to start with the problem is that bargadars have only occupancy rights and not ownership rights. If the government has to introduce changes in the law, the same has to get the centre's consent. Conferring ownership rights on the tenants also entails heavy expenditure on the part of the government administrative and otherwise.

As for the vested land assignes whose land is under the control of the government the prospects again are gloomy. Small pieces of land have been distributed without any initiative for reorganisation of land in mind. The pieces distributed are scattered and uncultivable in some cases. As such there is little scope for introducing any advanced

methods of cultivation. On the other hand in the process of distribution even the well placed sizable plots having irrigation facility for two crops have been divided into small pieces. This has something to with the overall agrarian programme of the Congress party which the left parties have adopted mechanically.

The foregoing discussion only points to certain limitations in the system as also the perspectives of the left parties which have implications for the long run goals of their programmes.

Another, much talked of programme, is creation of alternative employment opportunities through Rural Development programmes where in payment is made in kind. Taken up in a big scale during the lean season these programmes of course have provided livelihood and gainful work to the landless poor.

Jose has calculated the extent of employment generated under the rural job creation programmes in West Bengal from 1977/78 to 1979/80. During 1977/78 well over 55 million man-days of employment were created under these programmes. Nearly twice as much was created in 1978/79. Jose arrived at this estimate by deviding aggregate financial outlay made for this purpose for each year with prevailing agricultural wage rates and assumed that the entire quantum of public employment generated was in the state agricultural albour force. The per

worker availability of public employment in West Bengal during three years 1977/78, 1978/79 and 1979/80 and 15.05, 28.69 and 15.05 man-days per year respectively.

Jose has rightly said the programmes have several beneficial effects. Firstly, they directly enhance the total wage income of the agricultural labourers. Secondly, programmes stabilize, if not raise, the real wage rates of rural labourers. Thirdly, the practice of paying a large share of wages in kind serves as a safeguard against any escalation of food grain prices which in turn stabilizes the real wage rates of the agricultural labourers. Thus, the rural job creation programme has been the best complement to the redistributive programmes implemented (Jose, 1984 : 162-163).

As a matter of fact, the whole programme sponsored by the central government is very broadbased. Whoever is in dire need of work can take to it irrespective of landholding status and social background. The programme also involves improvement of rural public assets and infrastructure like village roads and schools, and so on.

One difference between other state where also these programmes have been implemented is in terms of avoiding leakages and making the programme very effective so as to see that the benefits really percolate to the needy.

In West Bengal this has been possible because of the political mediation provided by the leaders and influential persons of the left parties at panchayat and higher levels. Unlike the situation in other states where the contractors and officials swallow a sizeable portion of the budget, here officials on the whole, bureaucratic decency and the leaders at the village level have subserved the political purpose of the Left Front (Ghosh, 1983 : 114-115; Pranda, 1979).

The only unredeeming factor is that the quantum of work as mentioned above is not enough compared the e ver increasing rural work force. The whole programme, moreover, is at the mercy of the central government which may scuttle it at any time. Above all even when the programme is implemented reasonably well it carries the stamp of the central government.

CHAPTER - X

CONCLUSION : POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RADICAL LAND REFORMS AND AGRARIAN MOBILIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF A BOURGEOIS LIBERAL SOCIAL SYSTEM

In the forgoing chapters I presented the problem of communist parties working for their goals in the context of a bourgeois liberal system. I analysed the problem in the context of the theoretical framework elaborated in Chapter III and the practice of left parties in Russia and Germany. What emerged out of discussion is that the bourgeois parliamentary institutions could be utilized by the communist parties with the ultimate objective of achieving socialist society. By implication this means that utilization of bourgeois parliamentary institutions in combination with extra-parliamentary struggles would not hamper the advancement of class struggle, which is the cardinal principle of Marxist political practice. In regard to the formation of governments within the overall bourgeois system I argued against such participation, as it results in the loss of identity and also diverts the class struggle from the main track and leads invariably to revisionism.

The whole problem has been examined in the context of the practice of left parties in India particularly the CPI and the CPI(M). The psecific focus of the study has been

on the land reforms policy and agrarian programme by the two Communist parties in Kerala and West Bengal with emphasis on the periods during which they have been in power either on their own or in alliance with other bourgeois parties.

The main questions I have tried to consider are :

1. What happens when land reforms are implemented by left parties within the bourgeois liberal framework with bourgeois liberal programmes?

2. What is the nature of benefits which the landless and the landpoor get?

3. To what extent do land reforms implemented with the objective of electoral gains for the communists go in line with their programmatic goals of advancing the communist movement?

4. How far can the benefits that accrue to the landless and landpoor be sustained given the overall bourgeois liberal system particularly the play of market forces?

5. To what extent has the utilization of the land reforms programme helped the left parties to stabilize their power, spread the movement to other states and created scope for coming to power at the centre?

6. How far can it be a model for other states? Given the fact that other states led by other parties can also take the same measures; What is the speciality of the left alterative?

7. How far has the practice on the whole strengthened the illusions among the people about the state and the existing institutions?

The most sophisticated way of putting how the left parties conceive their practice in the bourgeois liberal system is :

> "By capturing the superstructure we mean establishment of the hegemony of the working class in the political, cultural and ideological spheres. Certainly the ruling classes will not permit such a denouncement; but according to the present constitution countrywide movements are perfectly legitimate. Economic struggles of the masses which occur spontaneously all too often are to be integrated with the political movements led by workers and peasants in the name of democratic aspirations. The immediate demands of the struggling masses which tend to blur their political vision are to be placed in proper perspective. The movement has to steer clear of economism on the one hand utopian adventurism on the other. The sole purpose of participating in superstructural institutions, namely parliament, government, trade union and the like, is to prepare for the decisive assault on the base of the society" (Sau, 1980:87).

While rejecting the theoretical stance of the orthodox Marxist School which speaks of one line relationship between the forces of production and the superstructure of the society, Sau suggests that superstructure can exert tremendous influence upon the productive forces as well as on production (Sau 1980:82).

With few exceptions regarding the characterisation of the state and class contradiction this theoretical stance has been adopted by both the CPI and CPI (M).

The policies of the Government in India in general and left orietned governments in Kerala and West Bengal in particular have undoubtedly influenced the course of changes in various fronts particularly the agrarian and industrial

sectors. There has been a cognisable difference between the changes in the states where left parties have been in power and states where their influence has been minimal.

Success of the agrarian programme of the Left Front Government in particular and the performance of the left parties ever since they started participaing in govérnments in 1967 in general is looked at from various angles by various people concerned. This is but natural.

The left parties who are in the Government look at the agrarian programme and its various components - security of tenure, redistribution of land, house sites to homeless in the rural areas, prevention of alienation of land and cheap institutional credit with a policy bias towards the landpoor - in quantitative terms. A crucial analytical criterion in their analysis of their programme is comparison with that of Congress regimes. The success of left parties is seen from the point of view that this would not have been poasible but for their coming to power. For this, of course, the left parties did spade work during Congress and United Front Regimes. They could get maximum strength in the State Assembly only when the traditional representatives of the ruling class in West Bengal faced a severe crisis at the national level and fell at the weakest link in the chain of power and domination

in 1977. That speaks a lot about how revolutionary situations are created and how the revolutionary parties can make use of such situations. Because the left as a whole did not have any viable national strategy they could gain power over their traditional strongholds in Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura. One can reasonably suggest that had they had workable national strategy from the beginning and worked on extra-parliamentary methods in combination with parliamentary methods through out the country with full independence they could have gained electoral power in most of the states. Thus, coming to power in West Bengal by the left parties was more a matter of a particular crisis situation in the bourgeois liberal system which provided an opportunity to the left parties to come to power through electoral means. It is true that the struggles waged by the left parties till 1977 paid them dividends in the form electoral gains in a big way rather surprisingly.

Another important feature specific to West Bengal is that the hold of the Congress had been getting weak and the party had lost credibility among the burgeois the agricultural labourers who constituted a majority in the rural areas. Added to this, the middle class intelligentia, an articulate section in West Bengal, has always opposed the Congress.

One of the achievements of the Left Front parties has been to consolidate their support bases and also to expand

them by the manifold influence which it acquired after being voted to power for the second time. The one, and perhaps the only, factor that has been favourable to Left Front's sustenance and continuence in power is its agrarian programme which aimed at a multifarious attack on semi-feudal agrarian structure.

After a thorough scrutiny of the left alternative of land reforms what comes out is that it is no alternative at all. This is more so in regard to the limited egalitarian character of reforms in Kerala. The following observation by Oommen is quite relevant in this regard.

According to him ceiling laws on the whole have not affected the inequalitarian structure. He writes : "The delay in the acquisition of land is due to procedural irregulatities stay orders from high courts etc. Much lands have been lost through malafide transfers and exemptions. Whatever be the reasons, it is almost clear that the ceiling provisions have not helped in ushering in an egalitarian society, though it may prevent concentration in the future. Even when it is fully implemented the income distribution structure would not be affected much as the estimated compensation is Rs. 3 crores and the amount to be collected (from beneficiaries) is Rs. 3.4 crores". (Oommen (1979 : 15-16).

The reforms measures in Kerala resulted in the reduction of inequality in the distribution of land and income

accruing from land to some extent. However, some of the recent evaluations on the results of land reforms beneficiaries from land reform measures were rich peasants and medium size holders rather than the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.

In Kerala the reforms have been relatively well implemented and substantial redistribution of privilege has been effected. But they fall short of distributing land to the tiller. This has to be viewed in the context of a state where left parties are very strong.

The privileges or obtaining income and security by way of ownership of land has been transferred substantially but not abolished. The rental income of the rentiers has been abolished but not the profits of capitalist landowners. The reforms have benefited the rich farmers and not the ppor farmers and agricultural labourers. The problem, to put it in Herring's words is with "...the conceptualisation of, rather than, lapse in implementation, of the reform measures, most importantly the uniform treatment of all tenant landlord relations as a feudal rather than a recognition of tenancy as a privileged property form on most of the leased in area in the state and the treatment of the problems of agricultural labourers as those of the rural proletariat rather than as those of an aspiring peasantry

to be. (Herring, 1980 : A.59). But then this is the limitation of the programmes of the left parties, in Kerala in particular, in not being able to conceptualise the tenancy as privileged property form because of their subseruience to the Congress land reforms programme in all its dimensions.

The specific features of the landless and the landed which Herring points out are : high proportion of landless households in comparison to the landed, widespread unemployment, the extreme concentration of peasants in tiny size categories, and the advanced state of modernisation of the economy, high rates of literary, non-agricultural employment and commercialization of agriculture (among the highest in the region) have together produced an extreme disjuncture between ownership of land and labour that crosses the categories of class and size. However, the landlord-tenant relation was equated with "feudalism" in the Communist policy logic although a distinct category within the landholding class including landlords leased land. (Ibid : 185). By implication, this fallacious conceptualisation of land lord relation has led to embourgeoiousment.

What can be implied from Herring's analysis is that the context of Kerala's agrarian class configuration, quite understably, is something which defies traditional identification of class conflict and formulation of tactics for bourgeois agrarian revolution. The problem assumes much more serious proportions when it comes to the implementation

of such a programme within the bourgeois framework in which parliamentary and electoral struggles are the main forms of political action. It is not far off the mark to say that President's rule and Congress - PSP interludes between 1959 and 1967 had blunted the whole process of policy making, legislation, implementation and mobilization of the agrarian classes as envisaged in the programmes of the communist parties.

The views of the left parties are clear in regard to the benefits of co-operativisation of agriculture both in terms of education, raising the level of consciousness of the landpoor about certain progressive forms of organisation of agriculture and immediate concerns like production and productivity. However, both in Kerala and West Bengal it has come out, after a reasonable degree of implementation of land reform, that the parties are facing constraints of various kinds in trying to introduce, either by imposition or by persuasion, co-operativisation of agriculture, although at the theoretical level they uphold the necessity of such a measure.

Herring's discussion of the constraints in evolving suitable strategies for co-operative agriculture are relevant here. After presenting three main strategies that figure in the current debate : (a) rapid development of capitalist farming sector to absorb most of the peasant

sector; (b) state initiatives to provide large scale co-operative or collective farms; (c) Japanese or Taiwanese model of capital intensive farming on small holdings; he points to the practical difficulties in some form of communalisation of agricultural production. The process requires creative administrative effects, presupposing 'a corps of committed cadres'. "The existing bureaucracies of South Asia" he writes, "can hardly be expected to provide innovative energies for societal transformation. The pervasive elitism of development bureaucracies and social, cultural class, and even linguistic barriers between officers and the poorest agriculturists hinder collaboration. Political parties have not offered an effective alternative; left parties are often urban oriented and generally lack extensive effective rural cadre systems. Where cadres operate they are more attauned to winning elections and extracting boons through the patronage network than mobilizing farmers for development". Referring to Kerala he says "Even in Kerala, where the agro-economic situation strongly suggests collectivisation and the strongest leftist party has extensive rural cadre networks and has shared state poer, it has not proved possible to make progress in this direction". (Herring 1983 : 263-64) I would argue that the same applies to West Bengal.

Added to these organisational difficulties are the presumed problems with the inhibitions of the peasantry such

as adamant individualism of the peasants and consequent attachment to small private plots.

Herring doubts the validity of the arguments of some who opposed co-operativisation. According to him the opinions expressed against co-operativisation are themselves a product of the existing bourgeois ideology and vested interest, though rationalised by certain narrow economic perspectives. These rationalisations are carried further by bureaucratic and elitist intellectual circles out of their half-hearted experiments in co-operativisation. However, it can be argued, in a framework of revolutionary land reforms carried out as a part of a programme of radical social transformation all such arguments will be attacked by way of bringing in changes on various fronts including the bourgeois ideological and cultural fronts. It is well neigh impossible to convince all sections of the peasantry to take to cooperative agriculture. There is no hope of left parties taking any initiative in this regard given their organisational and programmatic problems in overcoming constraints of the existing system. One redeeming factor of the agricultural production and productivity in Kerala and West Bengal is that inspite of the fragmentations of landholdings production and productivity have not gone down. Only and that too a tentative, inference that can be

drawn is that the rising expectations from a left led state could have been met, had initiatives in co-operative agriculture been taken.

The argument thus points to the failure of left parties in waging struggles, whether while in power or out of power, about ideas and institutions and raising the consciousness. After all struggles about ideas and institutions of society are struggles through which people become consciousness of their economic and political conflicts and fight them out. The classes affected thereby on the one hand defend themselves from the system and on the other hand strive to end a given system, of production relations.

I would say that the left parties have not done anything in regard to constitutional limitations and bureaucratic evils and the judiciary which has denied justice to the landpoor.

The various measures of land reforms taken up in West Bengal by the Left Parties while in power are very limited. The constituents of the left parties have unequivocally confessed this. Of particular importance is the analysis of the RSP and some academic studies which sound very relevant. It is true that the implementation of land reforms particularly, the registration of bargadars has been the saviour of the Left Front in the last eight years in the otherwise gloomy picture of development.

particularly the industrial stagnation. But the sharecroppers as yet have no proprietory rights over the lands they cultivate. In regard to redistribution of surplus land neither have the beneficiaries, the new allottees of there plots, been provided with adequate financial support for material inputs like fertilizers, improved seeds and implements etc. which would enable them to go in for intensive cultivation of their small pieces of land and earn a living. They have been eventually forced to sell off these holdings, or lease them out or mortgage them. The institutional financial assistance is either inadequate or does not reach them at all.

While institutional finance is meagre and asset based which can not be otherwise in the bourgeois property framework and the financial and banking policy is very inadequate, it has political implications. It creates more illusions than can be dispelled in the course of time when the left parties go for higher forms of struggle against the system, on the other hand such relief schemes are also adapted in Congress led states. These can be secured even when a Congress government is in power within a better leadership.

Even on the issue of inadequacy of institutional credit and constraints of statutory stipulations based on bourgeois constitutional right to property the land reforms beneficiaries can be mobilised for : (a) waving the rules and regulations and giving credits liberally, (b) formulating

and incorporating new rules in the constitution. A party wedded to advancement of the communist movement can claim to be so only when it takes such initiatives. However, the left parties while in power in West Bengal for eight years have not thought and acted in this direction.

By far the most important limitation that is presented by the Indian political system is that of the constitution. And it is quite evident that the Communist Governments' struggle when it came to power in 1957 to implement radical land reforms was thwarted by the centre with political motives subsequent United and Left Front Governments they could not make any break-through and subscribed to the constitutional niceties. The struggles the communist parties waged, particularly the land grab movement in 1972 by the CPI(M) in Kerala, cannot be said to be in any way radical in exposing the agrarian poor to these basic limitations in the political system and fighting against them. The left parties limit the struggles with all caution both from the view point of the programmes and also from that of the risk involved in going in radical mobilization.

Of course one of the crucial issues taken up by left parties, particularly while in power has been the centre-state relations. But, this involved propagating the centre's

negative attitude to the amendment proposal passed by the state assemblies. For instance the West Bengal Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill in 1981 passed by the state Assembly of West Bengal is still waiting for the President's assent. The provisions included in the Bill if the President's assent is given, will enable the Left Front Government inovercoming judicial obstacles in vesting the non-agricultural land by eliminating the non-agricultural Tenancy of raiyats involving an area of 28,52,826.90 acres, conferring ownership rights on the bargadars as also distributing the waste and non-agricultural land to the landless. But the Left Front parties have failed to politicise the issue radically by initiating struggles around these issues. They are rather satisfied in seeing the Bill through the Assembly and waiting for the President's assent and making excuses to the prospective potential beneficiaries that the State Government can not do much in this respect unless the centre gives its consent.

But this attitude of the left parties which emerges out of their serious concern to continue in power, which would not be possible if any struggles are initiated and a law and order problem is created. As a matter fact this is only a diversionary and opportunistic tactic stemming from the absence of political will on the part of the left parties in imparting radical political consciousness. As Desai, M.N.V. Nair and Ajit Roy have rightly put it, this

diversionary tactic leads the entire Kisan Movement and the movement on agricultural labour front away from sharpening class struggle and strengthening the militant class and mass organisations thus transforming them into reformistic, economistic pressure agitation, keeping class agitation down to a low key. The pressure thus created of course enables the Left Front Government led by the CPI(M) to continue in power and maintain law and order. The forces strengthened around the above tactic will act as a brake on class struggles of poorer toiling strata seeking to dissuade them from resorting to militant class and mass actions (Desai, 1984 :111).

Criticising the attitude of the Left Front towards centre-state relations one of the constituents of the Left Front Government, the RSP, argues : "The Left Front parties in West Bengal and Tripura have been agitating long for conferment of larger financial and power to the states and have a basic restructuring of the Centre-State relations under the Indian constitution. So have some other non-Congress(I) State Governments.....Agitation and movement for the restructing of Centre-State relations cannot be identified with the militant class and mass struggles that have to be waged for the realisation of their democratic demands and to move towards a basic social transformation" (RSP, 1983 : 29). Given the experience of the United Front and Left Front Governments in West Bengal and communist

and Left and Democratic Front Governments in Kerala, I would argue that these view points are right and to be taken seriously in understanding the political practice of the left parties.

The policies of the left parties on the agrarian front are also ridden with contradictions particularly in respect of the international context of the agriculture in India. Firstly, the national policy is guided by international organisations which the left parties have been adopting into their programmes without any hesitation, although such policy guidelines are not conducive to independent development of agriculture in India. Secondly, left parties have not shown any hesitation to multinational corporations to start agrobased industries like Haldia Fertilizers factory in West Bengal. This policy basically contradicts with the anti-imperialist stance of the left parties. Surprisingly, the leaders of the left parties, particularly, the chief Minister of West Bengal, Jyoti Basu are justifying with all their enthusiasm.

After the implementation of land reforms in Kerala and West Bengal and the experiment of left alternative to land reforms, the issues have been exhausted. Further, redistribution or any issue with radical appeal in the agrarian sector as also slogans about constitutional

limitations, Centre-State relations seem to be no more relevant as far as the overall programme of land reforms is concerned. After it has reached its logical and the left parties are in a dilemma as to what next is to be done. This is a clear cut evidence of absence of direction in terms of long term and short term perspective.

It is clear that the left aparties failed to spread themselves to other states. One of the expectations was to achieve the above objective by projecting the examples of Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura particularly in terms of the performance of left parties on the agrarian front. In terms of political gains of the left parties as whole and CPI and CPI(M) in particular this must be viewed seriously. The overall impression created is that coming to power in some traditional strongholds has nothing to do with the spread of the movement to other states and it appears that the classes in other states which are organised under the banner of the left parties are not overwelmingly influenced by the examples of Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura. As such in realizing the chief objective of spreading to other states it is not only the work of the left parties alone that is going to count but some crisis situation and opportunity as was provided in 1977. But it is also becoming very clear that the ruling classes and the interested international forces are not going to give any scope to such a situation to arise.

What appears to me is that the left parties have

opposed feudalism or capitalist landlords of various kinds in the agrarian sector at the theoretical level. Because they have chosen to work within the boundaries of a bourgeois system and more so by way of participating in the governments, the exegencies of stability, progress, electoral prospects etc. makes them divert from working for whatever short run or long run goals they have at the theoretical level.

Once they are sunk knee deep in the morrass of governance, alliances and the related interparty and intraparty problems it is only the administration and state apparatus that dominates the scene. This, I think, is only carrying the burden of the bourgeoisie and keeping aside the tasks of the left parties. Whether in Kerala or in West Bengal linking the electoral prospects with the tasks on the agrarian front particularly land reforms and agrarian mobilization has doomed the left parties to reformist concerns, both while they have been in power and out of it.

The agrarian situation is favourable to radical initiatives in the context of the geo-political situation of West Bengal. In the obtaining relations of production the exploiting capitalist or feddal lords are weak and the labouring classes starting from landless to lower middle class are numerically strong and relatively well organised. Hence, the support for the left parties in their electoral aspirations. However, this potential is not being used in any way for taking any radical initiatives. This potential

rather is being exploited for electoral purposes which in turn serves the purpose of maintaining the system as a whole. This is trend is well evident given the leadership composition which consists, mainly of rich, middle and petty bourgeois classes with the landpoor and landless having to trail behind.

The political practice of the left parties has reflected in their work in the parliaments and assemblies including the states of Kerala and West Bengal. That the CPI and CPI(M) MPs have not been able to project the programmes of the left parties and influence the policy making in a meaningful way has been revealed in their own party documents. The facts presented in the political organisational report of CPI(M) 1982, illustrate this:

"Efficient and effective functioning in the legislatures to discharge our responsibility as communists requires constant preparation and attention on the part of our MPs and MLAs. This is often neglected. Several of our MPs pay hardly any attention to parliament and even fail to attend important sessions. Our intervention in parliament debates and proceedings is not effective----------

Unfortunately, however, our functioning in parliament has remained as bad as ever, is even going from bad to worse. On innumerable crucial issues directly affecting our party

politically and our class and its allies economically, our presence in parliament is not felt by the people. Groups far smaller in number having far lesser impact on the political life of the country, are making their presence felt much more effectively only because they are functioning collectively with a view to using all availabe opportunities to project themselves and their polities. At a time when the ruling party is out to single out our party and the left movement for attack making it necessary for our MPs to be vigilant their attendance is deplorably meagre.... (CPI(M), 1982 : 76-78).

In regard to the work in West Bengal the above report reveals that although the party organisations have increased further, the progress of the movement fell short of what could be achieved. This the CPI(M) State Committee of West Bengal attributes to its failure in raising the political consciousness within the party among the people. Further, contact has been established with the people, it should be closer than it is.....(Ibid 97: 98).

This apart recent expulsions of party functionaries in Kerala and West Bengal point to the malaise in CPI(M). Speaking about the expulsion of 526 CPI(M) functionaries for committing bourgeois vices Saroj Mukherjee pointed out that "the number by itself is not too large considering that we

are the only Communist Party to be in office for eight years in bourgeoisie set-up and are thereby exposed to various pitfalls" (Indian Express July 23, 1985 ; Times of India September 12, 1985). All this only points to the embourgeoisment of party functionaries.

In the end I would like to make a distinction between agrarian reform and agrarian revolution in relation to Marxist theory and practice. Land reform initiated by state in a bourgeois society comprises a series of phases starting from policy declaration to actual benefits accruing to the intended beneficiary. The whole policy subserves the bourgeoisie as a whole and doesnot promote any basic transformation in the social set up. The industrial bourgeoisie will also be interested in such a reform which may appearantly sound radical. For example the industrial bourgeoisie in West Bengal views the ararian question as follows:

> "On the agrarian question, the BCCI has taken quite a radical position. It is very much aware that the low productivity in agriculture has kept the absorbing capacity of the vast rural market at a low level and thus acted as a brake on industrial development in the state and also on the fuller utilization of existing production capacity of industries. Consequently, it argues besides providing inputs and finance and procuring the agricultural surplus the state government should bring bargadars in direct contact with the state and confer on them permanent heritable and transferable rights. Land reforms which will give the cultivating peasantry a greater incentive for improving agriculture should be

implemented with priority especially in the form of rights to sharecroppers" (S. Mukherjee, 1983: :8).

Agrarian revolution on the other hand consists of peasants seizing lands of large landowners wherein it is not the initiative of the state that triggers action but the collective action of the peasants which amounts to the rejection of normal bureaucratic, judicial procedures as also adoption of new procedures that favour the intended beneficiaries. The whole process subserves revolution in the ultimate sense of the terms.

The ideologues of the two parties, CPI and CPI(M) quote Lenin extensively about the stages of revolution and the parties should not plan to skip the task of a particular stage; about the hesitation to involve all the strata of peasantry including the rich peasantry in the bourgeois democratic stage; about enriching the political consciousness of the peasantry and bringing them to the fore front and so on. They also answer such doubts like if the peasants are distributed lands in the administrative and bureaucratic process or in the process of forcible occupation of benami lands in the partisan struggle they will get attached to these lands and their revolutionary fervour will cool down. To clear this doubt they quote Lenin who wrote in the context of the Russian revolution :

> "In the present situation the movement of the peasant is undoubtedly a revolutionary one. Some say that the peasants after possessing land, will cool down. It may be so. But when the peasants will occupy lands, the despotic Government will not come forward to pacify them and that is the main point. It is only revolutionary Government that can approve of their possession" (Konar 1977 : 86-87).

After quoting Lenin Konar brings in the situation in West Bengal in 1970 when : "The installation of the united front has given the peasants an opportunity to go ahead. But we must not lose sight of the fact that in India the state is controlled by the capitalists and landlords; the power of the united front is also limited and conspiracy is being hatched to topple it too. So the peasants struggle for land will not cool them down; rather it will develop their revolutionary power. This should be nourished in the light of Lenin's teachings" (Konar : Ibid).

The implications of Konar's argument are clear. He is comparing here the Congress government with despotic government which Lenin referred to in the above quotation. To avoid that despotic government and in the immediate situation there should be a united front government which will allow the peasants to go ahead. But then the power or the united front itself is limited and India as a whole is controlled by capitalists and landlords which limits the power of the united front itself.

It is not illogical here to say that although there is a difference in the composition of the present Left Front Government it is limited in the same manner as

were the united front governments.

The struggles, of the peasants under the aegis of the united front and left front governments will go ~~to~~ ahead and these struggles will not cool them down but develop their revolutionary power to advance in the direction of the establishment of people's Democratic State, the concrete form of people's Democracy.

The whole thing sounds logical all right. But then the arguments of Lenin have been separated from the overall strategy of the Russian Revolution in which the crucial thing was the establishment of peasant soviets even during the bourgeois democratic stage of revolution and not relying on such weak forms of governments like united fronts and left fronts which emerge out of the game of elections, electoral alliances ~~and formation of parties.~~ The ultimate goal in the dictatorship of the prolatariat and thep peasantry was clear cut, unlike in India.

The whole practice of the left parties, particularly the aspects of mobilization can only be characterised as reformist or social Democratic. Whatever be the nature of issues, strategy and tactics, this reformist or social Democratic character of Marxist political practice overshadows it. The problems embedded in this theoretical stance are :

"The workers and peasants require a thorough going bourgeois revolution but and peasants it if the changes in that direction take place by way of revolution and not by way of reforms in that they way of reform is one of delay, procrastination, the painfully slow decomposition organism. It is the proletariat and the peasantry that suffer first of all most of all that putrefaction. The revolution path is one of rapid amputation which is the least painful to the proletariat the path of the immediate removal of what is putrecent, the path of least compliance with and consideration for the monarchy and abominable, vile rotten and noxious institutions that go with it" (Lenin, 1977c).

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